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How should the Church respond to the negative narratives within British society today, that are directed at and devalue those living in poverty?

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**King's College, London
The Department of Theology and
Religious Studies**

**How should the Church respond to
the negative narratives
within British society today,
that are directed at and devalue
those living in poverty?**

**DthMin
Doctorate in Theology and
Ministry
Research Based Thesis
2015**

Michael John Firbank

Abstract

The catalyst for this empirical thesis was a combination of personal experiences whilst ministering as a parish priest and the publication of two small pieces of British research ('Bias to the Poor' & 'The Lies we tell ourselves') that highlighted negative narratives that were directed at those living in poverty. Reports, found within this thesis, from government, think tanks and charities raise this issue as a serious concern for individuals and society as a whole.

As a Christian Priest I believe that the Church has a vocation and a duty to examine, analyse and then respond appropriately to social issues. This thesis uses the Pastoral Cycle of 'See, Judge and Act' framework to achieve this.

First this thesis looks at the lived experience of people on the receiving end of negative narratives and patterns of injustice that emerge from both the initial data and personal experience. Alongside this it examines the issues surrounding poverty, what it means to be poor, and the effect of living in poverty on both individuals and society.

Second this thesis turns to 'Judge' the national situation and ascertain whether these negatives narratives can be found to be prevalent in a larger national medium. This involves a qualitative analysis of the Daily Mail with an exploration of the power of narrative to influence people's perceptions and attitudes.

The epistemic injustice inherent in these media stories unpacks some of the dangers within these negative narratives. There is an impact upon people's perception and attitudes towards others. There are issues of prejudice and discrimination to explore and questions to ask both about these concepts, but also concerning their origins. What is it that causes society to create modern day scapegoats of individuals and groups? The complex phenomenon of scapegoating is explored in opposition to the freedom offered by accepting the offer to imitate God instead. In response to this there follows a theological reflection that examines some of the counter-narratives that can be found throughout the Bible.

In the final section, 'Act', the Church is challenged to defend those who are ostracised or ignored by mainstream society. The Church has a continual duty to respond to negative narratives with a healing narrative of hospitality and love. The prophetic calling upon the Church requires a response. It should and must respond.

Word count: 50937

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Introduction

George Orwell asked, in *The road to Wigan Pier* (1962), ‘do the “lower classes” smell?’ He answered this immediately with ‘Of course, as a whole, they are dirtier than the upper classes.’¹

0.1 The Catalyst.

I have had numerous experiences, as an Anglican Priest, working with those living in poverty. From 2010 to 2014, across two large urban parishes, I oversaw two independent food-bank centres and two drop-in centres that looked after and advocated for people who were in vulnerable situations. In 2014 these projects gave out over 122,000 meals to local families and individuals. This picture of need was mirrored across England with a national organisation that oversees the majority of food-bank centres, saying this: ‘Trussell Trust food-banks gave emergency food to 346,992 people nationwide in 2012-13, including 126,889 children. Rising food and fuel prices combined with static incomes mean more people are hitting a crisis where they can’t afford food.’²

The teams that I oversaw heard many sad stories and often acted as an advocate for people who expressed that they felt discriminated against, judged and thereby socially excluded, by different sections of society and especially stories about them within the media. As I approached this thesis I did so acknowledging my own positive bias towards anyone living in poverty and facing forms of social exclusion. It takes a great deal of courage for an individual to enter a food-bank centre and ask for food. I have often witnessed people breaking down and sobbing, as they never imagined themselves being in that situation. However, what acted as a catalyst for this thesis, and its research question, was that I often observed the same people derided with negative narratives that both blamed them for their situation, whilst also criticising their innate characters. As McKenzie’s research shows, those who are being stigmatised often know that others are demeaning and ridiculing them as they ‘are fully aware that they are ‘looked down

¹ McKenzie, L. (2015). *Getting by. Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press., p. 1. Dr. McKenzie, beginning her research with an apt quote from Orwell, is an ethnographer specialising in exploring the complex issues of class inequality. She also lived upon an estate, St. Ann’s in Nottingham, that was regularly stigmatised by the press. Some of the pupils that I taught, when I worked in education (1995-2004), also came from that estate. They too, coming from very deprived estates such as St. Ann’s, Meadows, Lenton and Radford, often spoke to me of being ‘looked down on’ by people from other parts of the city. They had also learned to say that they lived on more affluent estates when asked, because they then received a better response. Certain shops in Nottingham, at that time, had even banned any pupils who came from these estates.

² Trussell Trust. (2014). *Help crack UK hunger. 2014 Easter-appeal*. <http://www.trusselltrust.org/easter-appeal>. Online.

on', they are 'made to feel small' and they are 'disrespected.'³ Those whom I met often knew that they were being derided by others for the situation of poverty they were inhabiting. As this thesis discusses later on it leads to a culture of criminalising those living in poverty, for being poor, that then creates the fertile ground for the creation of scapegoats.

I also observed the gap between those whose voices were listened to (and had epistemic agency) and those who were disenfranchised and experienced truncated citizenship on an institutional and regional level. Whilst working as a parish priest in Cornwall, from 20 05-2014, I was privileged to be part of the Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum.⁴ This is a charity that attempts to both raise the profile of poverty across the county, and to challenge unjust structures in society. It primarily does this through hosting open-forum days, in conjunction with the Anglican Diocese, called 'Poverty-forums.' Anyone who was both living in poverty and had experienced derision and/or discrimination was invited to come and publically tell their story. These days were filmed and then put into social media websites so that the stories could receive a much wider audience. This simple premise of 'listening' to the personal narratives of suffering was declared, by those who told their stories, to be a cathartic and often healing process. For some people it was the first time that they had ever been asked to tell their story and had the opportunity to be listened to. Their experiences impressed upon me, from a pastoral perspective, the healing qualities of both being listened to and being taken seriously by other human beings. Numerous groups were invited to these public hearings ranging from the press and the local council, to statutory agencies and civic leaders. It was never difficult to persuade those who had experienced a challenging life to come and give their personal testimony; it was always an uphill struggle to draw in those who had the authority, the influence and the epistemic agency to make changes to the very structures that created or maintained the poverty and discrimination being suffered. It was, for me, an early lesson on the disjuncture between those who had significant credit as epistemic agents and those who were locked in a place of cumulative disadvantage and epistemic injustice (terms explored in depth later in this thesis). However, the personal experience of hearing people tell their heartfelt testimonies was a powerful one. It demonstrated, to me at least, that even a small opportunity to have epistemic agency was cathartic and uplifting for those who previously had very little experience of being listened to and taken seriously. The key principle at play here was the space for people to exercise their

³ McKenzie, L. (2015)., p, 204.

⁴ See: Poverty Forum. <http://www.cornwallindependentpovertyforum.btkc.co.uk/>. Online.

own voice, rather than have others speak for them.

As I have already alluded to it is important to declare one's personal bias and background in approaching an analysis of any social issue. No one approaches any issue *tabula rasa*. Poverty, and those living in poverty, occupy a special place within my psyche, my heart and my understanding of the world around me. The personal experiences of watching people who are living in poverty being demeaned and devalued has been personally painful to watch. As a parish priest the reality, for me, is that my theology often comes out of, and is challenged by, the pastoral work I engage in. This pastoral work often involves meeting people who are struggling and are in need of considerable support at significantly difficult times in their lives. I believe that a pastoral responsibility is also a social one. Not only it my responsibility to help people in a predicament, it is also my calling to examine what should be done to prevent that situation occurring again - both locally and more widely within the Church.

0.2 An autoethnographical approach.

This thesis follows the established pastoral framework of 'See, Judge and Act' as it examines the research question. This method, 'The Pastoral Cycle' is explored in greater detail in this chapter. In the first part of this thesis, 'See', a number of my personal observations from pastoral ministry are used to reflect upon the lived experience of people alongside current data and reports on the pressing societal issue of negative narratives. The method involving one's own personal experiences, known as autoethnography, is well established and has validity in research. It offers appropriate academic space to utilise personal experiences in a self-reflective manner that are relevant to a research question. The method itself can appear both messy and emotive, but it permits an opportunity to be vulnerable within an academic framework. It can be a powerful method for describing and analysing personal experiences in order to better understand the cultural experiences being examined. In essence it 'uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences.'⁵ The reality within qualitative research is that the researcher often has a both personal story relevant to the research and a personal interest in the research question. Through the vehicle of autoethnography the researcher can explicitly make visible their own biases and beliefs. Autoethnography can also be described as a critique of and a 'response to the alienating effects...of impersonal, passionless, abstract claims of truth

⁵ Adams, T. E., Jones, S. H. & Ellis, C. (2014). Autoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p, 126.

generated⁶ by traditional research methods and academic language. However, it must not fall into the trap of avoiding academic scrutiny and hide behind its personal accounts as simply being valid in themselves. Significant drawbacks with autoethnography include the following: the dangers of being narcissistic in an egocentric focus; failing to reflect or engage in any serious analysis; and neglecting to examine any data external to one's personal recall of events.

This is no one single manner of writing autoethnographically. However, it is argued that the researcher, using this method, is acting as a storyteller who can 'depict people struggling to overcome adversity...showing people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.'⁷ The privileged place I hold within society, as a parish priest, means that I, alongside others, should take the following seriously: 'acknowledging and critiquing our place...we must use the stories we tell to break long-held silences on power, relationships, cultural taboos, and forgotten and/or suppressed experiences.'⁸ This autoethnographical approach is akin to a storyteller who re-tells the story as close to the experience as can be recalled. The story told can create a connection between the reader and 'others different from themselves or offer a way to improve the lives of participants and readers.'⁹ The benefit of this approach is that when it is used well it should 'change the world and make it a better place.'¹⁰ The Church, as a vehicle for the light of Christ in the world, is called to be a transforming presence in each and every community.

0.3 My faith.

My calling to challenge and seek to transform unjust social structures originates, I believe, as an invitation from God. He calls Christians to do theology that 'makes an effort to see those who are hidden and excluded...theology is a call to look at society and culture "from below," with a special attention to the losers and the outsiders, the weak and the voiceless.'¹¹ For me it begins with the following: as all peoples are created

⁶ Ellingson, L. L. & Ellis, C. (2008). Autoethnography as a constructionist project. In Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.), Handbook of constructionist research. New York: Guilford Press. pp. 445-466., p. 450.

⁷ Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject. In Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). The Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage., pp.733-768., p. 760.

⁸ Adams, T. E., Jones, S. H. & Ellis, C. (2014)., p. 103.

⁹ Ellis, C. (2004). The Ethnographic I: A methodological novel about Autoethnography. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press., p. 124.

¹⁰ Denzin, N. (2000). Aesthetics and Qualitative inquiry. Qualitative Inquiry. 6(2)., pp. 256-265., p. 256.

¹¹ Sedmak, C. (2002). Doing Local Theology. A Guide for artisans of a new humanity. Maryknoll: Orbis Books., p. 100.

in God's image, and all of creation is declared as good by God, there should be a foundational belief that all peoples should not only be seen as equal, but also receive, and be offered, the same level of respect and dignity. Any negative narratives that demean or devalue other peoples should be judged, through the lens of social and theological analysis, in that context. Therefore, at the outset it is important to declare two significant aspects that I bring to this thesis as a normative base: a personal belief in, reliance upon, and understanding of Jesus Christ and Biblical teachings; and inspiration, that I draw upon for my ministry, from traditions and leaders across the history of the Church. As a Christian and a parish priest it is Christ, as the Incarnate God, who I follow and take my lead from. It is the narrative of Christ, his incarnation, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection, that defines and shapes who I am and how I try to live my life.

For the Church, Christ is the *raison d'être* for its very existence. There are two well established vehicles, which manifest themselves in the following order, through which Christ is proclaimed in the world. First there is Scripture that contains, for Christians, divinely inspired texts about God, the world and the Incarnate Christ. Second there is the Church itself which exists to proclaim the resurrection of Christ in both word and deed. I became a parish priest in the Church of England in 2006 because I believed that God had called me into a ministry of healing and reconciliation. The Church is traditionally understood to be the body and vehicle through which the world should continue to experience the reconciling love of Christ. God, through scripture, calls his people to serve those in need and challenge injustice because 'Jesus paid special attention to the poor, to the excluded, to the marginalised... That is why the theologian is called to pay special attention to the poor.'¹² A significant part of my personal calling to ministry can be described as a belief that 'social reform is an important response to human need, as part of our discipleship and love of both God and neighbour, and as a proper part of the mission of the church in the world.'¹³

Scripture is traditionally understood by the Worldwide Council of Churches to be a collection of sixty-six books that were written by people who were themselves inspired by the Holy Spirit. These seemingly separate books are understood to tell a corporate, complex and interwoven narrative of God who created everything. This meta-narrative contains a combination of God's rationale for creation, his plans for humanity through

¹² Sedmak, C. (2002)., pp. 97-99.

¹³ Ed. Schuller, M & Ashcroft, J. (2005). Jubilee Manifesto – a framework, agenda & strategy for christian social reform. England: IVP., p, 19.

the covenant and then the culmination of his self revelation through himself in the person of Jesus Christ who is believed, by the Church, to be the incarnate God. Within Scripture, explored in chapter four, there are a number of texts that support the Church in speaking an additional and healing narrative. The very property of the overarching meta-narrative of God means that it can both encompass joys and sorrows experienced locally and also, through its polyvalent nature, offer a healing narrative that can demonstrate what a fair and just society should look like. The negative narratives, explored within this thesis, are a powerful antithesis of this. It is in response to the existence of negative narratives that Brueggemann implores Christians to engage in an imaginative retelling of the Scriptures so that its truth can be heard today; truth that will not only challenge, but can also reconcile and heal. He writes about the corruption of truth found in society that is ‘a totalizing environment’ where wealth and power is in the hands of a few. A better alternative is in re-telling a narrative that hears ‘the cry of the oppressed as did the God of the burning bush’ ...and remonstrates with a truth that matters ‘in a society that depends too much on greed against neighbour.’¹⁴ The Biblical narrative arguably teaches that God is inextricably involved with everything and everyone on both a micro and macro scale. This thesis argues that ‘knowledge of God is acknowledgement of neighbour and *Love of God is love of neighbour*.’¹⁵

As part of my faith I often draw inspiration from numerous Christian social reformers that sought societal change to unjust structures. One personal favourite is Catherine Booth who was the joint founder of the Salvation Army (in the latter part of this thesis I reflect upon St. Chrysostom whom I also admire greatly). Catherine spoke passionately about, and worked tirelessly in, the support of the poor in Victorian Britain. She struggled amongst much criticism of her work with alcoholics and her theology of church and eschatology. However, she fiercely believed that ‘the church is not an end in itself, but a means to an end’¹⁶ and strove to reach out beyond any material boundaries and into people's daily lives, as well as into social and political structures that maintained social injustice and thereby created a monolithic state where some were held in perpetual poverty. The Church, I believe, is called not only to be prophetic in its action and words, but also wise and humble. It has a teleological hope that emanates

¹⁴ Brueggemann, W. (2013). Truth speaks to Power. The countercultural nature of scripture. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press., p159-161.

¹⁵ Brueggemann, W. (2010). Journey to the Common Good. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press., p, 111.

¹⁶ Read, J. (2013). Catherine Booth. Laying the Theological Foundations of a Radical Movement. USA: Pickwick Publications., p, 140.

from Scripture. Throughout the Bible different laws, historical stories, prophetic warnings and parables demonstrate that God wants His people to 'open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'¹⁷ Jesus, often returning to such passages, taught God's people that 'neighbour' went beyond the chosen people and include even one's enemy saying, "Go and do likewise."¹⁸

I find myself drawn to many passages in Scripture that refer to poverty, whilst acknowledging the inherent danger in picking out favourites that simply match a personal bias. However, with that in mind, one key verse from the Old Testament states this: 'there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you.'¹⁹ This, like many other similar verses, is written in the imperative voice with a clear expectation that God's people will obey. However, when the Church engages in transforming social injustice, especially concerning those who are excluded, it should always be aware that its understanding of forgiveness may end up by leaving an unjust and oppressive situation intact. There are numerous examples of this around the world where missionary minded projects have left poor people in a worse condition than they were initially found, having used the "blue-print approach" in which the economically non-poor make all the decisions about the project and then do the project *to* the economically poor.'²⁰ The prophetic discomfort of this flawed approach could indeed be levelled at me as a middle class Christian running food-bank centres for the poor 'benefit-class' in the community. I believe that an integral part of being a Christian and being Church is living a life of justice and mercy. Willimon wrote about the dangers and risks of a Christian calling saying that scripture teaches the world, 'to define words like "justice" as "thy kingdom come", and "righteousness" not as "the greatest good for the greatest number" or "equal pay for equal work", but rather as "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."²¹ Despite these pitfalls, this thesis purposefully works towards a conclusion that will make some clear statements about how the Church should respond to the prevalence of negative narratives with its own prophetic narrative of reconciliation and healing.

¹⁷ New International Version Bible. (2009). London: Hodder & Stoughton. See: Deuteronomy 15:11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (2009). See: Luke 10:37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* See: Deuteronomy 15:4.

²⁰ Corbett, S & Fikkert, B. (2012). When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor and yourself. Chicago: Moody Publishers., p, 134.

²¹ Willimon, H, W. (2000). Calling & Character, Virtues of the Ordained life. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p, 68.

0.4 My denomination: The Church of England.

The ministry I am called to is performed within a large denomination and institution also known as the Anglican Church. This is a national organisation with numerous rules, orders and traditions. It is also the denomination which the research question refers to when it asks 'How should the Church respond to negative narratives...?' This ministry though is often localised and rooted in the reality of a place and time within a parish church. This can leave, and this is true for me personally, those who are part of the Church in a quandary over an ongoing and controversial debate about its ecclesiology. This debate is an important one to discuss as it will have considerable impact upon what actions can be practically suggested in the conclusion of this thesis.

On one hand there is the institution of the church which requires constant maintenance and considerable resourcing, on the other is what can be described as a more 'frontier' ministry that seeks to transform society²² into being more like God's kingdom on earth. Segundo suggests a clear, but challenging, option for the Church's ecclesiology: 'was the original message aimed at masses...or was it aimed at minorities who were destined to play an important role in the transformation and liberation of the masses?'²³ His options appear to offer either a large institutional Church which is interwoven with the fabric of society, which describes what we have traditionally experienced, or a collection of small groups of Christians who operate outside of that societal fabric with a ministry to promote structural change. The reality for me as a parish priest is that I have to hold the two together in tension, dialectically, as I believe that one cannot exist without the other. They require each other. The reality is the I, as a priest, cannot remain constantly within the safety of an institution which has annually falling worshippers, neither can I simply reach out to non-attenders at the 'frontier.' The institution provides the resources and opportunities for 'frontier' ministry, whilst success at the 'frontier' requires a base to both operate out of and return to. Ironically if we were to disband the Anglican Church for being guilty of being an institution, in order to be solely 'frontier', we would at some point find ourselves setting up another institution in order to support the 'frontier' ministry we had chosen.

This ongoing debate is occurring within troubling times as, for the first time in our ministry records, there are fewer than a million regular Sunday worshippers in the Church of England. Alongside the falling numbers of attendees, there exist diametrically

²² The Church can find that this is 'inimical to present power arrangements²²' in the world around it. Brueggemann, W. (2013)., p, 165.

²³ Segundo, J. L. (1976) *The Liberation of Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books., 209.

opposed theological positions, amongst both the clergy and laity, on sexuality and headship. The governing body, General Synod, finds itself caught in the midst of these antagonistic theological debates whilst it also tries to bring in new legislation which aims to simplify ecclesiastical law and give local churches more scope to become 'frontier.' However, as the next chapter shows, there is evidence that the Church of England can work effectively within the tension that exists and be a catalyst for transformation in local communities.

The Church often says it wants to be a serious dialogue partner with the world that it is part of - offering the gospel as good news for all. However, one other danger of being an institution, with its numerous rules, orders and traditions, is it that it may not be willingly to put itself at serious risk of being challenged through that dialogue. Dialogue should, I believe, always begin with a genuine willingness to listen and learn. Dialogue should be a genuine attempt to reflect the Incarnate son, Jesus, whom scripture teaches came to earth to become the ultimate and willing servant of all humanity. Browning rightly challenges the institution of the Church stating that, 'any claim we make on others they should be able to make on us'²⁴ because no organisation should ever be the sole validating source of its own decisions. The Church should engage in the type of dialogue, with the world that it is part of, that is open to 'new possibilities...and have a polyvalent attitude, an openness to many meanings, allowing the text and new critical ideas to interact as they challenge our perspectives' ... [because] ... 'we must desire truth rather than confirmation of our existing ideas.'²⁵ The Church must never mistakenly assume it occupies truth as if it were its personal possession. The institution of the Church, as the vehicle for the Gospel, should be acting only as a conduit for truth to emerge and flourish. A conduit that is simply the means for truth to be transmitted. Sometimes institutions, because of their complex nature, can struggle to be conduits.

0.5 The research question.

The research question that this thesis answers is this: 'How should the Church respond to the negative narratives in British society today that are directed at and devalue those living in poverty?' This is a question prompted by both my personal experience of working with many families and individuals living in poverty, and my belief that the Church has a vocation to act justly as that conduit of truth.

²⁴ Browning, S, D. (1996). A Fundamental Practical Theology. USA: Fortress Press., p, 187.

²⁵ Osborne, G. (1991). The Hermeneutical Spiral. A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Illinois: IVP., p, 412.

Many times I have sat with people as they have shared painful stories about both their financial struggles and how badly they had been treated by neighbours, strangers and governmental officers (those mentioned included staff at the following: Job Centres, Council Offices and Social Services). It struck me, on reflection, that this could point towards a broad societal culture of negative narratives about, and directed at, those living in poverty. As a personal experiment, as I wanted some level of verification concerning this, I often offered to listen in on phone calls from benefit claimants to these governmental officers. The vast majority of the times I did this I was shocked to hear how badly the claimant was treated as the tone of the conversation appeared, to me at least, to be range from being patronising, to antagonistic. I often offered to take over the conversation and introduced myself as the claimant's parish priest and gave my full title. At this point the governmental officer's tone and attitude became, in my opinion, more respectful and considerably more helpful. These encounters demonstrated to me, anecdotally, how individuals found themselves demarcated into a truncated citizenship through a narrative that stereotyped them. These people, derided and demeaned for their condition of poverty, seemed to be occupying the role of a scapegoat upon whom societal blame could be placed. As a scapegoat they were an easy target for others to blame and devalue.

No one should ever be subjected to the level and amount of negative narratives exposed and analysed later in this thesis. These narratives both devalue and demean people whom God states through His son should be able to live a life that is fulfilling and abundant.²⁶ Berger reminds the world, in which these negative narratives are so prevalent, that 'I look upon this type of inequality itself always as an evil.'²⁷ He sought for society not only to support those who began life in poverty, but also to free people from the oppressive use of power that often uses the vehicle of negative narratives, maintains unjust structures and locks people into a position of poverty in society.

0.6 Methodology.

These experiences led me to believe that this issue, encapsulated by the research question, needs careful exploration and analysis. In doing this a clear method is required that seeks to both answer the question and provide some ways forward as a response. In the second half of the twentieth century, in *Mater et Magistra*, the Catholic Church

²⁶ NIV Bible. (2009). John 10:10. 'I have come that they may have life and life to the full.'²⁶

²⁷ Prochaska, F. (2006). Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain, The Disinherited Spirit. Oxford: OUP, p, 164.

begin to take more seriously the work and methodology of Cardinal Cardijn - referred to as the 'See, Judge, Act' method or 'The Pastoral Cycle.' Cardijn spent many years ministering to workers who were continually living and struggling in poverty. He sought to understand the reality of their situation in order that the Church, both locally and globally, would have the insights it would need to challenge unjust structures in a transformative manner. Pope John XXII, in his encyclical,²⁸ promoted the process of 'See, Judge, Act' as a clear and valid approach to discerning and examining the reality of the times. He stated that it should be used to analyse complex social situations with theological reflection in order to determine what the Church should actually do in its calling to transform social problems into solutions. Pope John XXII clearly states that this method should be followed 'in the reduction of social principles into practice.'²⁹ The Cardijn method of social inquiry, 'Seeing, Judging, and Acting'³⁰ is also found to be commended by a number of theologians including the following: Graham,³¹ Segundo,³² Brown,³³ and also Ballard and Pritchard who said that 'the pastoral cycle should be at the heart of any contemporary perspective on Practical Theology.'³⁴ The Church has a distinctive and critical role to play in responding to the social, spiritual and material needs of communities. The Pastoral Cycle provides a clear methodology for analysing, reflecting theologically and acting as disciples of Christ in hopeful and transforming ways.

²⁸ *Mater et magistra* was the encyclical, published in 1961, which concentrated upon the Church existing more authentically in order to promote a more kingdom orientated approach to the world. It challenged the Church to transform unjust structures within society and seek the common good for all humanity.

²⁹ Catholic Church. Gibbons, W. J. (1961). *Mater et magistra: Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII : Christianity and social progress*. New York: Paulist Press., p, 136.

³⁰ See: Mich, M. (1998). *Catholic Social Teachings and Movements*. New London: Twenty-Thirds Publications. Mich traces this method back to practical reasoning built upon the teachings of both Aristotle and Aquinas.

³¹ See: Graham, E. Walton, H. Ward, F. (2005). *Theological Reflections: Methods: Vol 1*. London: SCM Press.

³² See: Segundo, J. L. (1976). He argued that at a foundational level the method entails 'the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal.', p, 8. Furthermore, that if we are to challenge the status quo we must seek questions that are "rich enough, general enough, and basic enough to force us to change our customary conceptions of life, death, knowledge, society, politics, and the world in general.", p. 8.

³³ Brown, D. (1991)., p, 7.

³⁴ Ballard, P. Pritchard, J. (2006). *Practical Theology in Action - Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*. London: SPCK., p, 82.

0.6.1 The Pastoral Cycle: See.

The first section, 'See', involves observing and experiencing the actuality of life for individuals and groups. This practically concerns the naming of what is wrong and looking at the lived experience of people. This is localised theology that is concerned with the 'stuff' of people and taking seriously their concerns. However, it cannot assume that what appears to be true for some is, therefore, true for everyone else. Therefore, it looks to suggest what the patterns of injustice may be that are acting as barriers to people in society. This involves looking at the following: What personal observations and experiences can be sited; what is known about this issue and situation through primary data; and what are the effects of this issue of negative narrative upon those on the receiving end.

Chapter one begins to 'See' what the issue is by examining primary data available from two church based sources alongside personal experiences.

Chapter two looks closer at the issues surrounding poverty in order to 'See' what living in poverty may mean for those on the receiving end of negative narratives. This includes some of the controversies regarding poverty that exist within the public domain. It examines some of the effects of poverty upon those experiencing it, as well as upon wider society.

0.6.2 The Pastoral Cycle: Judge.

Part two, 'Judge', involves analysing the issue as it is, its causes, its consequences, the key actors, the agents of influence, and then giving critical insights into it based upon an informed judgement. This leads into a reflection on the issue in the light of what Scripture says about social justice. Holland³⁵ divides this section of the pastoral cycle 'Judge', into the two subsections: social analysis and theological reflection.

Therefore, the first half of 'Judge', social analysis, examines recent events and experiences; it looks at structures that are relevant and pertain to its analysis; it examines, in the light of current trends, the concerns that this issues raises; and looks at what the outworking's and consequences are, and who or what may be behind the issue. Social analysis examines not only the barriers that exist, their structural composition and origin, but also those who are disfranchised by them, and the ways in which they suffer as a result of their existence. Essentially it is an exploration into why this is happening, why it continues and who is losing out as a result. This is done within the

³⁵ See: Holland, J & Henriot, P, S, J. (1990). Social Analysis. Linking faith and justice. New York: Orbis Books., pp. 13-23.

understanding of the complexity of any social analysis as needs and issues can and do change. In addition, the power of social analysis can unveil controversial, and sometimes seemingly invisible, unjust structures that may feel overwhelming and beyond any solution. 'It is a way of stepping back and taking a careful and courageous look.'³⁶

Chapter three, the social analysis, conducts an in-depth qualitative study (thematic analysis) of one national newspaper, the *Daily Mail*. This newspaper is shown within this thesis to be particularly involved in negative narratives within its daily articles.

Barth said this about the importance of the media in forming societal attitudes:

'Newspapers are so important that "I always pray for the sick, the poor, journalists, authorities of the state and the church - in that order. Journalists form public opinion. They hold terribly important positions."''³⁷ Narrative can be a powerful vehicle for influencing attitudes and opinions. This chapter looks at what the effects of the analysed negative narratives, upon those they are direct at, could be.

The latter section of 'Judge', theological reflection, is an 'effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed experience in the light of living faith and scripture'³⁸ in order that new perspectives may begin to arise and formulate. Holland argues that theological reflection needs to examine the social analysis in the light of a more holistic approach the include the following aspects: 'living faith, scripture, church social teaching, and the sources of tradition.'³⁹ Theological insights into this issue can provide a valid judgment about the situation under examination. This judgement should be based upon a theology of hope as all Christian theology begins and ends with a creator God who loves His creation and seeks to be reconciled with all of it.

Chapter four, the theological reflection, examines some of the biblical narratives that are both an antithesis and counter-cultural to those already examined in the *Daily Mail*.

Brueggemann argues that narrative is an extraordinary force in society saying this: 'I think that narratives construct the world for us and dictate policy and practice, and I think that our society is trying to live by a false narrative... So it seems to me the challenge for the church is to see whether we can show we have a better narrative, a more accurate narrative, out of which to generate policy and practice.'⁴⁰ In doing so it

³⁶ Sedmak, C. (2002)., p, 104.

³⁷ Times Magazine. USA. (Friday 31st May, 1963). Religion: Barth in Retirement. Vol. LXXXI No. 22. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601630531,00.html>. Online.

³⁸ Holland, J & Henriot, P, S, J. (1990)., p, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.* (1990)., p, 9.

⁴⁰ Interview. (2010). This Narrative of Death that is So Powerful Among Us. RD in conversation with

also makes a Christian response to the negative and destructive social vehicle called the 'scapegoat' as a means to explain the origins of, catalyst for and the fuel that maintains these negative narratives. 'Girard observed that most social groups have an inherent need to scapegoat another person or group in order to maintain their own internal stability.'⁴¹ However, as this thesis will demonstrate, the biblical narrative tells quite a different story.

0.6.3 The Pastoral Cycle: Act.

The purpose of the research question is to determine what actions the Church should take. This final section of the Pastoral Cycle, 'Act', involves the creation of a plan that demonstrates how new actions can change the current situation that, throughout this thesis, has been both 'Seen' and 'Judged.' This section states what individual Christians, parish churches and the broader Church should do. This involves the dialectic combination of an eschatological hope for the future with a realistic understanding of the sinful world as it stands.

Chapter five, the 'Act', brings this thesis to its conclusion and presents a plan for action that includes service to the marginalized, education awareness aims, the creation of advocacy streams and the drawing together of existing processes to create something different. This section, 'Act', provides the blue prints for a bridge that the Church should build in order to decrease the gap between the issue as it is now and the situation as it should be.

The Church has an important role to play and a calling to respond. That calling comes from a belief in an omnipotent and loving God who, argues Volf, challenges His Church to act as 'a "prophetic" faith that seeks to mend the world...[because] An idle or redundant faith, a faith that does not seek to mend the world, is a seriously malfunctioning faith.'⁴² It is the responsibility of the Church to 'Act' and tell a different, healing and reconciling narrative that is spacious and inclusive for all.

Walter Brueggemann.

http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/atheologies/3283/this_narrative_of_death_that_is_so_powerful_among_us. Online.

⁴¹ Rees, E. (2000). *Scapegoat Theology*. Published in *The Furrow*. Vol. 51, No. 9., pp. 503-508. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27664139>. Online., p, 504.

⁴² Volf, M. (2011). *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. USA: Brazos Press., p, xv.

Chapter one: 'Seeing' the Issue

1.1 Introduction.

This chapter looks at the lived reality and experiences of individuals and communities using primary data, two published reports, alongside personal experiences. The first report was conducted by the Church Urban Fund and called 'Bias to the Poor?'⁴³ This utilised data collected by the British Social Attitudes surveys from 2011 and added in their own findings taken from empirical research conducted across the parish churches in the Church of England. The second report was called 'The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty'⁴⁴ (2013). These reports highlighted key negative narratives which argued lead to further discrimination of those already struggling with truncated citizenship and living in poverty. Each of these reports gives a useful insight into the reality of the situation regarding negative narratives and sets the scene for this thesis.

1.2 The Church Urban Fund: Its history.

I have worked with the Church Urban Fund, established by the Church of England as a practical response to unmet need amongst the poorest communities, serving as a vice-chair of one of its regional operations. This organisation has a long and proud history of serving local communities and people in need. Its journey helps to describe something of where the Church of England, as an institution, is presently in terms of its culture and promotion of social justice with particular reference to the poorest communities in England.

In July 1983 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, initiated a commission comprising of a large group of experts from across a number of academic disciplines and national organisations to examine poverty and the issues that held people in poverty within England's large urban environments. This report, claiming to be based upon Biblical principles,⁴⁵ was published in 1985 and immediately became politically

⁴³ CUF. (2012). Bias to the Poor.

http://www.cuf.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Bias_to_the_poor_Jan2012.pdf. Online.

⁴⁴ Joint Public Issues. (2013). 'The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty'.

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Truth-And-Lies-Report-smaller.pdf>. Online.

⁴⁵ Archbishop of Canterbury. (1983). Faith in the City. A Call for Action by Church and Nation. London: Church House Publishing., p, 48. The report reminded the reader of various times that Jesus spoke about the poor and that his 'proclamation of the Kingdom of God... was to be embodied in a community where the normal priorities of wealth, power, position and respectability would be overturned.' It was a call for the Church to act and for the world to change that came out of the normative foundation of Scripture.

controversial,⁴⁶ receiving considerable hostility from some media outlets.⁴⁷ It was also the catalyst for setting up the Church Urban Fund (CUF) in 1987. CUF was founded, as a charity, with the mistaken opinion that by 2007 it would no longer be needed, as the Church, with many other partners, would have proactively worked towards lasting solutions in those urban environments. The Archbishop's commission spent two years in inner cities looking at data, for example in some parts of cities where there was over 50% unemployment, and also in interviewing local people, community groups and large corporate organisations. The introduction to the report highlights that they discovered significant issues which drew the following conclusions: that

poverty is at the heart of powerlessness...[with people] trapped in housing and environments over which they have little control. They lack the means and opportunity...of making choices in their lives.⁴⁸

The report talked about inequality, polarization and injustice being at the heart of the social, economic and political issues they encountered.⁴⁹ The commission, demonstrating its integrity, recorded that there had never been a period of time when the Anglican Church had ever served the cities well. It openly stated that it was not only seen by the general population as, but also in reality was (and arguably remains), a predominantly white middle class establishment in its complement of clergy, laity and structures. In addition, it laid down this challenge to itself:

the teachings of Jesus makes many demands on us...Jesus' call to show compassion on those in need is one of these...but it can hardly be said that the Church is yet making this a high priority.⁵⁰

This proved to be a much needed catalyst for the Church of England in terms of its willingness to engage in 'frontier' ministries in poor communities. A Home Office

⁴⁶ The report made 23 specific recommendations to the government of the time and arguably put some of the blame upon Conservative Party policies for maintaining the level of poverty highlighted in the cities. This quote acts as just one example of how controversial the report was when one Conservative MP was recorded claiming that the report proved that the Anglican Church was governed by a "load of Communist clerics".? Campbell, J. (2003). *Margaret Thatcher: The Iron Lady* (Jonathan Cape, 2003), p. 390.

⁴⁷ 'Paul Johnson, in the Daily Mail, described it as 'a flawed gospel...intellectually beneath contempt' and the tabloid papers were generally dismissive.' Beeson, T. (2013). *Priests and Politics: The Church speaks out*. London: SCM Press., p. 197.

⁴⁸ Archbishop of Canterbury. (1983).., p. xv.

⁴⁹ CUF's explicit Biblical normative base does not stand against or aloof from an economic stance. Sedlacek states that with 'Christianity as the leading religion of our Euro-American civilisation' both 'social and economic ideals' can be seen as complementary, rather than competing. Sedlacek, T. (2013). *Economics of Good and Evil*. New York: OUP., p. 167.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (1983).., pp. 47-48.

report,⁵¹ written years later in 2004, contained some significant recommendations that commended how both the Church and Government (local, regional and national) were now working closely together for the good of local communities. The report highly praised the work of the local parish church and highlighted the impact upon social injustice in many local areas across England. This also demonstrated a considerable shift from the political and media hostility shown towards the initial commissioned report in 1985 (Faith in the City), which is probably less to do with party politics and much more an indication of a cultural shift in political willingness, across the political spectrum, to work with the Church in general. It also showed how much more the Church, both nationally and locally, was working as a catalyst for transformation in local communities.

In 1987 CUF set themselves a target of raising £18 million in its initial years, which it achieved, with a primary objective of providing grants to the local, parish (and predominantly Anglican) churches that would act as ‘mustard seeds’⁵² for locally church-led community projects across a number of poor urban environments. It targeted its grants wherever it found communities that were locked into poverty with little hope of escape alongside a local church that was willing to be part of possible solutions. An experienced urban priest, writing about CUF’s potential for social change, said this: ‘bad housing, low incomes and unemployment have an inescapable effect on a community. Inescapable is the most appropriate word. Pressure on family life is great, often beyond breaking point.’⁵³ Years later a report commissioned by CUF looked back upon its first eighteen years of work across England stating this: ‘the story told by the key findings is one of added value...they rise out of the qualitative experiences of people...[and] for every £1 contributed by CUF, an approximate value of a further £8 may accrue.’⁵⁴ From a number of good news stories collated it appeared that many other organisations began to work in partnership with CUF and would match fund a CUF

⁵¹ Home Office. Faith Communities Unit. (2004). Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151393.pdf>. Online.

⁵² CUF, as a foundational principle, took its lead directly from this Scripture: ‘it is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.’ Luke 13:19. In purely agricultural terms the mustard seed grows prolifically as it is very robust against pests and can produce seeds after only sixty days of growth. At the heart of CUF has been a Biblical expectation that a local church, once given a ‘seed’ grant would be able to grow its support work exponentially for those living locally in poverty, just like the mustard seed.

⁵³ Grundy, M. (1990). Light in the City. Norwich: The Canterbury Press., p, 18.

⁵⁴ Dinham, A. (2005). The Mustard Seed Effect: the wider role of Church Urban Fund in areas of urban disadvantage. London: Church House Publishing., p, 61.

grants to local community groups. This led a number of new charities being set up and, as a secondary effect, a number of organisations that have previously worked in isolation beginning to work in partnership. The biggest issue that CUF began to face, after 18 years, was the joint challenge of financially sustaining itself as an organisation and those that it had helped to begin, providing the 'mustard seed' grants and capacity building consultancy services to support ongoing growth.

Recently, in 2014, CUF said this about itself:

we are passionate about bringing God's love, hope and justice to the poorest and most marginalised people in England, empowering them to transform their lives. We believe the local church is uniquely placed to make this happen...We work at a national and local level, bringing churches and Christians together to tackle poverty where we are, right now.⁵⁵

This ongoing work includes a number of research projects which it commissions and publishes annually into differing aspects of poverty including the one looked at below: 'Bias to the Poor?' Each of these research projects has demonstrated a combination of successful work in poor communities, as well as highlighting ongoing social injustices as part of unjust structures within society. They each attempt to be prophetic and pragmatic in their approach and analysis.

1.3 CUF's report: 'Bias to the Poor?'

This report, mentioned in this chapter's introduction, goes to the heart of CUF's values and work. However, it unwittingly demonstrated that both churchgoers and the general public (non-churchgoers) alike had not only a lack of awareness of poverty in the UK, but also a lack of sympathy with a bias against those living in poverty. This empirically showed, for the first time, that the Church of England has a significant issue internally - that their own people share the same view of those living in poverty as that of the non-attending public. I too have personally experienced this throughout my ten years, so far, in ordained ministry. Each time I worked with CUF to promote social justice through local projects it was predominantly congregations who did not want their buildings used or their money re-allocated to this purpose. In their defence there are considerable pressures placed upon a continually declining numbers of worshippers as the annual costs of buildings and ministry increase. However, that does not account for the social attitudes shown by the data below and there has yet to be any empirical research carried

⁵⁵ CUF. (2014). About us. <http://www.cuf.org.uk/about-us>. Online.

out to analyse this significant issue for the Church of England. This appears to be an example of the ongoing ecclesial battle between an institutional culture versus a 'frontier' approach.

CUF's report was based upon both data which they collected from parish church congregations, and the much wider national research provided by NatCen who produce the British Social Attitudes survey⁵⁶ (BSA). The BSA's annual research surveys over 3000 adults.

1.3.1 Attitudes to poverty.

CUF's research showed that of the 3000 (plus) people interviewed by NatCen (for the BSA survey) almost identical percentages of regular churchgoers and those who professed no religious affiliation responded with negative attitudes towards those living in poverty. This prompted them to write their report 'Bias to the Poor?' in order to highlight this as a significant issue both within society and the Church of England. The headline figures are as below:

- In both groups 38%, of the 3406 interviewed by NatCen, (which equates to 1,294 people) said they believed that poverty in British society is inevitable;
- Only 12% of churchgoers and 10% of those who were non-religious, of the 3406, (between 408 to 340 people) said that those in poverty had simply been unlucky in life;
- Only 22% of churchgoers and 20% of non-religious people, of the 3406, (751 and 681 people respectively) said that poverty had anything to do with unjust structures within society.

In combining the first three bullet headlines, as seen above, the data suggested to CUF that between 73% and 75% (of the 3406 people interviewed) have a 'fatalistic or passive attitude to poverty.'⁵⁷ The data goes much further into people's attitudes once additional comprehensive questions from the BSA survey are analysed. What is striking about the data is the considerable similarities between those who attend church, presumably hear

⁵⁶ NatCen is a UK based independent social research centre that has been conducting both quantitative and qualitative empirical research into social attitudes in Britain for forty years. It carries out many pieces of research for different bodies that range from government departments to national charities. Its core annual research is the British Social Attitudes survey. It began this in 1983 to examine trends and shifts in the British public's perceptions towards a variety of aspects in society including poverty, politics, religion, education et al. BSA states that the variables within their data can vary as much as 6% leaving a small margin for error.

⁵⁷ CUF. (2012)., p, 2.

sermons and read their Bibles, and those who do not. There seems to be little difference made, according to this data, in people's attitudes towards poverty even with a Christian normative foundation.

1.3.2 Attitudes to inequality

With regard to this issue of negative narratives CUF picked out five pertinent questions from the BSA statistics believing that 'attitudes to inequality are of interest because there is growing evidence that large differences in income are bad for society as a whole.'⁵⁸ The headline figures, percentages of regular churchgoers and those who professed no religious affiliation, are as below:

- 79% of churchgoers and 75% of those who are non-religious (of the 3,406), which equates to between 2,691 to 2,555 people, said they believed that large income differences are inevitable.
- 64% of churchgoers and 60% of those who are non-religious (of the 3,406), which equates to between 2,180 to 2,044 people, said they believed that large income differences give people an incentive to work hard.
- Representing an almost equal divide in opinion 50% of churchgoers and 51% of those who are non-religious (of the 3,406), which equates to between 1703 to 1737 people, said they believed that large incomes are unfair.
- Demonstrating, perhaps, a competing tension within this issue there were 56% of churchgoers and 65% of those who are non-religious (of the 3,406), which equates to between 1,907 to 2,214 people, said they believed that large income difference contribute to social problems such as crime.
- Lastly only 36% (identical for both groups), of the 3406, which equates to 1226 people, said they believed that large incomes are morally wrong.

This data initially looks very negative with regard to the public attitude, religious and non-religious, towards both poverty and an inequality gap in income. There is a surprising cohesive response from the two different groups. CUF were expecting that those who described themselves as committed to the Christian faith, and attended church regularly, would tell a different narrative towards poverty. A challenging question for the Church to investigate further is surely this: does going to church make

⁵⁸ CUF. (2012)., p, 3.

any difference to attitudes towards the poorest in society?

1.3.3 NatCen: British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey.

The BSA categorize their methodology as an ‘annual cross sectional study... [that uses] ...a multi-stage stratified random sample.’⁵⁹ Their extensive data was only used briefly by CUF for their report ‘Bias to the Poor’ missing out other interesting results that are highlighted below. There are a number of categories of adults within the BSA survey and these are combined, for the sake of brevity in this chapter, to the mean average where there was no more than a 10% difference between the lowest and highest percentage of answers collected. The BSA survey offers insights at depth into British attitudes because of the following: it has been conducted annually for over thirty years, it uses the same core of questions, it uses the same methodology each time, it examines a cross section of society including political views and it is trusted by governments and independent charities alike. In addition, its data, methodology and interview questions are transparent and open to public scrutiny. Additional and relevant findings in the BSA Annual Survey, not used in CUF's 'Bias to the Poor' report, are shown below.

BSA: Children living in poverty.

On average 80% of the public thought it was vital to reduce the number of children living in poverty equating to, on average, 2725 adults of the 3406 interviewed. However, when asked what the predominant reasons for those children continuing to live in poverty were the responses were as follows (on average):

- 71% of people surveyed, equating to 2,418 adults, stated that it was due to alcohol and drug addiction in the household;
- 60%, equating to 2,044 adults, believed that it was because the adults in the household were refusing to find employment;
- whereas only 24%, equating to 817 adults and merely a quarter of those surveyed, suggested that children were continuing to live in poverty because of inequality in society.

⁵⁹Park, A; Curtice, J; Clery, E; Bryson, C. (2011). British Social Attitudes: The 27th Report. London: Sage Books Publications., p, xii.

BSA: Income gap.

However, when questions moved from the specifically personal, relating to people and families, and moved onto conceptual, political and structural questions the answers seem almost diametrically opposed.

- A large majority of adults asked, 77% equating to 2623, stated that the gap in income between those living in poverty and the wealthiest is too large;
- Whereas 22%, 749 adults, believed that this gap exists because of social and structural injustices.
- Demonstrating a dilemma in British attitudes, 52%, 1771 of adults, stated that the large differences in incomes were wrong or unethical.

BSA: Unemployment benefits.

Finally, and in relation to those receiving unemployment benefits the following attitudes were discovered. On average only 21% of adults asked, equating to 715 adults, believed that these benefits were too low and led, therefore, to households living in poverty.

Whereas a majority of those asked, 61% and 2,078 adults stated that these benefits were too high and, therefore, dissuade those who were unemployed from seeking and accepting offers of employment. All of this data supports the premise behind CUF's brief piece of research 'Bias to the Poor?' that there are not only negative attitudes in British society towards those living in poverty, but also interwoven into this issue is the public's lack of knowledge and awareness of the actuality of what life is like for some of their neighbours. There are, it would appear, some set narratives about those living in poverty.

The second report, '**The lies we tell ourselves**', complements that which has already been examined. It deals, using some qualitative research from recognised institutions, with negative narratives that appear to be prevalent in social attitudes.

1.4 The Report: 'The lies we tell ourselves: ending comfortable myths about poverty.'

Four national Christian denominations pooled their resources and conducted a separate piece of current empirical research into the societal attitudes towards those living in poverty in England today. Their research, published in March 2013, tackled six specific myths towards poverty that the research suggests had entered into the cultural narrative of society predominantly via the print media. Whilst they examined a large number of

different newspapers across a range of weeks only those that contained negative narratives were used. They did not draw out these negative narratives from a random selection of newspapers. A random selection, as an arguably more valid approach, would have helped to ascertain whether this issue was a regular and daily phenomenon (demonstrating it as a socially acceptable practise), rather than an irregular or occasional one. The former method would demonstrate a more worry issue as it would suggest that these negative narratives are embedded in societal attitudes and, therefore, arguably part of our normal cultural language. Despite this criticism of their research a collection of set negative narratives, directed at those living in poverty, were found to be prevalent across a number of national daily newspapers. The six myths⁶⁰ highlighted in this report were these:

‘They’ ...are lazy and just don’t want to work;
are addicted to drink and drugs;
are not really poor – they just don’t manage their money properly;
on the fiddle;
have an easy life on benefits;
caused the deficit.⁶¹

This report's conclusion states that the Church should respond to these negative narratives by taking the lead in the creation of healing narratives. These would act as the vehicle for the Church's response as a national advocate for those living in poverty.⁶² In addition, this report stated that in believing these myths society gives itself permission to ignore the plight of those living in poverty, and thereby an excuse not to engage in any responsibility towards changing or challenging unjust structures that may contribute to or maintain poverty. These claims, if valid, present a demonstrable example of a group of people being devalued and set apart from the rest of society because of a dominant, but false, narrative; a dynamic that is called scapegoating and will be examined in a later chapter. In this report there are numerous references to the media that it accuses of proliferating these myths. The most prominent of these is the

⁶⁰ Armstrong, A. (2010). "Myths of Poverty--Realities for Students." Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review 75, no. 8., p, 49-53. This education research paper highlights this very issue of myths that lead to devaluing a group of people: children and their parents. Once classic example is cited: ‘Poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education.’ Armstrong’s research rejects this using data that demonstrates that ‘poor parents’ often have multiple jobs without security, cannot get time off work, work in the evenings, may not have transport or be able to afford public transportation. Myths, or narratives, are a powerful force in social attitudes.

⁶¹ Joint Public Issues. (2013)., p, 3.

⁶² Sedlacek, T. (2013). He looks at truth and mythology in economics across history, highlights the fairness inherent in Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness and the Old Testament teaching on releasing people from debt., pp. 134-135.

Daily Mail newspaper. The report itself utilised data mainly from the Department for Work and Pensions (Her Majesty's Government) and respected charitable research organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In direct response to the six myths discovered by this piece of research '**The lies we tell ourselves**', the following direct retorts were offered as a challenge to them:

the majority of children in poverty are from working households...
fewer than 4% of benefit claimants report any form of addiction...
the experience of living on a low income is one of constant struggle...
less than 0.9% of the welfare budget is lost to fraud...
benefits do not meet minimum income standards...
the proportion of our tax bills spent on welfare has remained stable for the last 20 years.⁶³

This report was not well received by everyone. The topic of poverty is both controversial and divisive. A rival research think-tank, The Centre for Social Justice⁶⁴ (CSJ), responded to the report '**The lies we tell ourselves**' less than 30 days after it had been published (in April 2013) with a number of criticisms. Following this, the 'coalition' of Church denominations that initiated the initial report quickly responded back to the CSJ's response and criticisms in July 2013.

1.4.1 The Centre for Social Justice's critical response to 'The lies we tell ourselves.'

The CSJ openly defended the Coalition Government's record on managing the economy and the reductions in spending on the welfare budget and retorts the Church's report by questioning their methodological approach. CSJ commends the government's welfare reforms and praises the ongoing implementation of a new benefit system called 'Universal Credit'. The CSJ analysed the rising number of non-working households that has grown in England over the last two decades and tackled the Church report on a two-fold basis. They asked who had created the problem in the first place (it suggests the previous Labour government) and what the issue actually is (that their failed policies created a benefit-dependent culture). However, the CSJ also acknowledges that any narrative that assumes people living in poverty are lazy is wrong and that those in

⁶³ Joint Public Issues. (2013)., pp. 4-5.

⁶⁴ The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) was established as an independent think-tank by the MP Iain Duncan Smith in 2004. It operates as a centre right think tank that often, but not always, conducts research supportive of Conservative social policies.

poverty gaps can and do manage their finances well.

1.4.2 The joint churches' critical response to the Centre for Social Justice

In summary their most direct counter retort was that whilst the CSJ may have some validity in their criticisms of anecdotal narratives, or the manner in which data was used within the report, the CSJ did not at any point 'comment on the issue of the misrepresentation and stigmatisation of the poorest.'⁶⁵ This is the significant issue at the heart of the report '**The lies we tell ourselves.**' Other responses included challenges to the use of the word 'dependency' as a word loaded with meanings. They suggest that without revealing what the CSJ meant by that term it is open to a spectrum of meanings. In addition, this challenge was based upon the concern that terms such as this, if used without clear parameters and attention to the complexities therein, have an effect of branding a large group of people in a negative manner. This negative narrative may lead to this group being devalued in public attitudes leading to forms of discrimination; indeed, it can, and does, lead to scapegoating. They further highlight the research which they used throughout their report, provided by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), which the CSJ chose not to engage with at all in their criticisms. Their final retort to the CSJ is as follows: 'The answer to the question – "why are the least well off misrepresented and increasingly feeling stigmatized and blamed?...cannot be "Universal Credit is great."'⁶⁶

This 'Ping-Pong' dualistic approach of claims and counter claims simply demonstrates the ongoing difficulties in the public debate over poverty and the divergent rhetoric that is employed. The question as to whether the language employed in the public domain is derogatory about, and devalues, those living in poverty is at the heart of this thesis. This thesis will explicitly examine the power of narrative in the print media and its capacity to scapegoat groups of people.

1.5 The convergence of public attitudes

A further examination of current research shows that there are worrying trends in societal attitudes. JRF tracked the public's attitudes towards poverty and welfare between the years of 1983 and 2011.⁶⁷ They concluded that, in contrast to perceived

⁶⁵ Joint Public Issues. (2013)., p, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (2013)., p, 6.

⁶⁷ See: Clery, E; Lee, L; Kunz, S. (2013). Public attitudes to poverty and welfare, 1983-2011. Analysis using British Social Attitudes data. NatCen Social Research: London.

expectations, both the supporters of different political parties and those who class themselves as independent were more unified by 2011 in their negative attitudes towards those living in poverty than at any point during this period. Irrespective of party political philosophy or rhetoric (socialist or conservative) those surveyed were generally in agreement in how they now view those living in poverty. Some of the headline figures for these shifts in this attitudinal survey are below:

JRF: People are lazy.

In 1994 15% of those surveyed considered people living in poverty to be lazy, whereas in 2010 that had increased to 23%. Over the entire period, 1983-2011, those believing that social injustice played a significant part dropped from 30% to 23%.

In 1983 40% of those surveyed believed that those who were unemployed could find a job but did not want to, whereas by 2011 this had risen to 58% showing a significant shift in attitudes. However, the fact that the unemployment rate had begun to fall by the latter date may go some way to explain this.

JRF: Many people do not deserve benefits.

In 1987 nearly half of those surveyed, 45%, disagreed with this. However, by 2011 this has dropped significantly to 29% demonstrating a hardening of attitudes towards those receiving welfare payments. Those who chose to abstain from responding to this statement rose from 24% in 1987, to 35% in 2011. Those with sceptical or ambivalent views of those living in poverty have hardened in their attitudes over the last two decades.

JRF's research suggests that both inequality and poverty, whilst distinctly different issues, are closely related. However, what is the greatest risk inherent in these issues is that as the income gap grows wider and groups in society move further apart any sense of corporate social responsibility fragments further. The JRF also highlighted research gaps within its analysis of BSA survey data and the public's attitudes to welfare benefits, income gaps, inequality and fairness. They suggest that there needs to be further research into why some views appear to be contradictory and whether current research accurately measures public attitudes considering the possibility that words such as 'fairness', 'inequality' and 'dependency' probably have multiple meanings in the public domain. Most relevant to this thesis is their suggestion that research needs to be carried out on the 'discourses' that people draw upon. Where do people receive these

narratives from that act as the drivers that shift attitudes over time?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is another extraordinary example of how the Church can be a catalyst for transformation. It was founded by its namesake⁶⁸ who, as a leading and practising Quaker, believed in transforming unjust structures in society. Joseph took his inspiration from Biblical principles that led to the initial beginnings of this charity in 1904. Joseph believed in the normative foundation of Scripture, that inextricably links faith and justice together in its challenge to the Church to respond to social crisis with a spiritual and practical 'hunger' for the community that it co-exists with. It is this 'hunger' for community that the Church needs, especially in 'a society that can be marked by rootlessness, fragmentation, and spiritual sterility.'⁶⁹

Today the JRF not only manages its own projects that support people in need, through a range of supported housing provisions, it also conducts empirical research into poverty and the possible causes thereof. As an organisation it continues to analyse the causes of social breakdown (poverty) in order that it might have empirical data that leads to solutions which not only support those in great need, but also ensure that others do not fall into the trap of poverty in the first place. Their most recent data, at the time of writing this, offered the following headlines:

In 2011/12, 13 million people in the UK were living in poverty. For the first time more than half of these people lived in a working family...The number of people in low paid jobs has risen. There are now around 5 million people paid below the living wage...Around 500,000 families face a cut in housing benefit via the under-occupation penalty and a reduction in Council Tax Benefit.⁷⁰

As a snap shot on its own this would lead to an initial negative analysis concerning the state of British society at this time with those on low incomes are, perhaps, struggling to balance their income and expenditure. The complexity with this seemingly straightforward picture of British society is that there is another side to the story showing that, 'The proportion of pensioners in poverty is at its lowest for almost 30

⁶⁸ As a devout Christian, reliant upon scriptural teachings, he believed that God commanded his people to alleviate poverty wherever possible. Joseph championed social reform and, as a philanthropist, supported numerous charitable causes. He set up his own trust, now split into four separate trusts that led onto some of the first significant and empirical research into poverty and its causes in England.

⁶⁹ Holland, J & Henriot, P. (1990). Social Analysis. Linking Faith and Justice. New York: Orbis Books., p, xx.

⁷⁰ JRF. (2013). Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2013>. Online., p, 1.

years...unemployment is falling and the labour market is stronger.’⁷¹ On a personal level, due to low interest rates, my own mortgage repayments in 2014 are over 50% less than they were in 2010. This more complex picture of poverty is mixed throughout the country with wealth and opportunities found to be disproportionate amongst different groups. Who is poor and what is poverty, in Britain today, is complex and contentious. The British Government, alongside the European Union, has continued to judge ‘poverty’ to include any household who earns less than 60% of the median income for that country. The initial difficulty inherent in this methodology of measuring poverty is that as the general income of a country rises so does the median and those who are measured to be ‘in poverty’ may, therefore, remain there indefinitely. Whilst those households may have enough to eat, pay their bills and have some disposable income they may always be deemed, if earning no more than 60% of the median income, to be living ‘in poverty.’ JRF’s analysis goes deeper into this national problem saying that despite there being favourable data for some there is a ‘broadening of poverty happening at the same time as the experience of poverty, for some people, gets more severe.’⁷² Those living in poverty are remaining there and finding their lives becoming more strained as their household budgets become increasingly difficult to balance each year. An additional issue is most keenly demonstrated by an analysis of the income inequality gap which, last taken in 2007, states that ‘the top 1 per cent (of the population) are now owning nearly a quarter of all marketable assets.’⁷³ This speaks into not only the issues of those living in poverty, whose incomes have remained static as living costs rise, but also into the wider effect on community cohesion within society that finds different groups of peoples moving further away from each other. This widening gap may be causal in the hardening of public attitudes and the negative narratives directed at those at the bottom of the income ladder, especially those receiving welfare benefits.

⁷¹ JRF. (2013)., p. 1.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷³ Orton, M; Rowlingson, K. (2007). JRF: Public attitudes to economic inequality. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/public-attitudes-economic-inequality>. Online., p. ix. Relying upon data from the World Bank JRF use the internationally accepted ‘Gini coefficient’ which shows that economic inequality rose during Tony Blair’s Labour Government and continues to do so during David Cameron’s Coalition Government. JRF evenly criticise both governments for their failure to either understand or tackle this a major issue of community cohesion. The Gini coefficient examines income earned and the proportionality of income shared; it compares these two axes to analyse the inequality gap between those with the most income and those with the least. The scores for each country range between 0 (perfect equality) and 1 (perfect inequality). During the years 2000-2010 the inequality gap, in the UK, has risen from 0.3331 to 0.345; a considerable shift towards inequality.

1.6 Concluding thoughts.

It is clear, from both reports that have been examined, that there are negative narratives that are directed towards those living in poverty within British society. It has also begun to draw out the complexities of the very nature of poverty, some of the controversies and its multidimensional nature. The narratives looked at so far appear to be both demeaning and devaluing. This chapter has looked at some distinctively negative narratives that are directed at those living in poverty. These were found to be prevalent across a number of national daily newspapers. Six key phrases⁷⁴, that were deliberately made in reference to those living in poverty, were these:

‘They’...are lazy and just don’t want to work;
are addicted to drink and drugs;
are not really poor – they just don’t manage their money properly;
on the fiddle;
have an easy life on benefits;
caused the deficit.⁷⁵

These key phrases not only stereotype people, but they also make them into scapegoats to take the blame for societal ills. This role of scapegoat takes away people's right to be heard, heeded or acknowledged as an equal. I have seen many examples of this whilst a priest. Families who had once been seen by others as part of the community were quickly shunned and physically avoided, even at the school gate, when it discovered that they were using the local clothes and foodbank.

There was an assumption made, in the narratives that were spoken about them, that they were either lying and did not really need help or that their situation was their own fault and they had nobody to blame but themselves. They were given the role and labelled, effectively, as a scapegoat with astonishing speed.

⁷⁴ Armstrong, A. (2010). "Myths of Poverty--Realities for Students." Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review 75, no. 8., pp. 49-53. This education research paper highlights this very issue of myths that lead to devaluing a group of people: children and their parents. Once classic example is cited: 'Poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education.' Armstrong's research rejects this using data that demonstrates that 'poor parents' often have multiple jobs without security, cannot get time off work, work in the evenings, may not have transport or be able to afford public transportation. Myths, or narratives, are a powerful force in social attitudes.

⁷⁵ Joint Public Issues. (2013)., p, 3.

Chapter Two: 'Seeing' what living in Poverty means.

In answer to the question: who are those whom we call poor?
Sedmak states that the poor 'are the weakest members...those
who suffer most are the poor.'⁷⁶

2.1 Introduction.

Definitions are important and need, therefore, to have a clear description. Definitions can shape the manner in which issues are examined, analysed and then solutions offered. It is fair to state that when people talk about poverty in the UK they do not mean the same kind of absolute poverty that is seen, often on television, in developing countries predominantly in the southern hemisphere. Absolute poverty, to a great extent, is no longer an issue in the UK. The poverty that continues to be prevalent for some in the UK is better described as relative poverty and refers to those who face social, economic or cultural barriers to full participation in society. Relative poverty is a significant issue for some in the UK today; how many are experiencing relative poverty depends entirely upon which measurement is used.

The opening paragraph in this thesis showed data concerning how families, in increasing numbers, have to rely upon food and clothing banks. Others are shown to struggle to pay basic bills and access basic opportunities and services. Whilst poverty continues to be officially measured in terms of household income it is widely accepted that this does not provide a complete picture of the issues surrounding poverty. Poverty, in terms of its definition and its measurement, continues to be highly controversial across the world with many different methods of collecting data and then analysing the problem. It is a multi-dimensional issue that effects every country, but often in differing ways. In addition, the issue can become embroiled in politics when either a government needs to show an increase in deprivation in order to secure international funding, or others need to show a decrease in order to promote the success of their economic and social policies. This thesis does not attempt to examine or analyse the many different, competing and controversial approaches to defining and measuring poverty.

The reality in England is people do find themselves trapped in poverty of differing kinds. Some are trapped for short periods of time, whilst others are in an ongoing and continuing cycle from which there seems no end. Poverty prevents people from flourishing and places people in a vulnerable and weakened state.

⁷⁶ Sedmak, C. (2002)., p, 103.

2.2 The 'Web' of Poverty.

The Church Urban Fund, over thirty years, have worked in many deprived communities and conducted (in collaboration with many other research bodies, on numerous analyses of the issue of poverty. As part a recent 'relaunch' they published their working definition of relative poverty. This attempts to build a more holistic picture of poverty, its effects and consequences. It is their working definition which examines the complexities and multi-dimensions of relative poverty in Britain today. It is, therefore, specific, contextual and distinctive in that it looks to only describe the situation in this country in the present day.

CUF's definition is called 'The web of poverty'. This creates a more holistic picture regarding the types of poverty that entrap people. It includes the following that create an impoverished condition for those experiencing them:

an inability to access resources or gain qualifications or skills;
poor or dysfunctional relationships that lack cohesion or support;
and a lack of personal identity and self-esteem.

This means that those living in poverty 'lack a strong sense of self-worth and a belief in their own ability to respond to challenges.'⁷⁷ This 'web' is interlocking and describes the variety of strands which, put together, create a cumulative effect and hold people in the condition of poverty and impoverishment.

CUF argues that when these are experienced together people are left vulnerable, their impoverishment sustained and their disadvantages cumulatively increased. Those caught in this 'web' struggle to flourish and thrive. They cannot access the opportunities to participate fully in society. The reality for those living in poverty means that they can often spend a great deal of their time engaged in basic economic activity that equates to simply 'running just to stand still.' Often I would observe that many families who accessed our foodbanks would express, in different ways, how they felt crushed and overwhelmed by their situations. They talked about how they lacked the mental space in their heads to be able plan for the future, to consider other options, to even budget for the week. It never appeared to me to be a lack of care or a deliberate act of unwillingness on their part; they simply struggled to cope under the 'weight' of their

⁷⁷ CUF. (2014). The Web of Poverty. Understanding and Responding to Poverty in England. <http://www.cuf.org.uk/sites/default/files/PDFs/Research/Web-of-Poverty.pdf>. Online. This report claims that there is a link between the poverty of *resources, relationships and identity* leading to a growing number of people who are living, perhaps permanently, in poverty. The data collated came from: the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Office for National Statistics, Citizenship Survey and Health Survey NHS.

problems and could not see a way out of the 'web', as described by CUF, they were caught within. There is a relational aspect in this web that suggests a compound and cumulative effect upon those caught within it which diminishes their humanity and strips away their dignity. This is direct opposition to a Christian approach which, as I have argued, should view and work towards a world where all human beings are shown equal love and regarded with equal worth.

The web, as a metaphor, is extremely powerful. It is, of course, also an organic construction created by a spider who uses this complex vehicle in order to catch prey. In the construction of a web a spider releases multiple threads as it creates each web. Each line on a web is reinforced as the spider goes back over each line again and again. It is this repetition that causes the cumulative strength of the web and can be likened to a narrative that is repeated time and time again. It is in the repetition that both the spider's web and narratives grow in strength and influence. Those who were living in poverty whom I worked with knew the multitude of ways in which others demeaned them and they knew the myriad of ways in which the press would misrepresent, ridicule and laugh at them. These narratives would happen again and again - in multiple layers that would entrap them akin to the spider's web. From these demeaning narratives there appeared to be as little hope of escape as there was of escaping the relative poverty they were in. The web that a spider weaves is a three dimensional object and it is common for a web to be considerably larger, up to twenty times bigger, than the spider itself. A negative narrative can start with one simple, small phrase that incisively, and demeaningly, cuts into people's character growing cumulatively as it is shared again and again. Its power and influence growing as more people repeat it and share it.

CUF's web of poverty definition offers an important picture of the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty in Britain today. The relational aspect of CUF's definition is part of its strength. It points not only to the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, but also to the way in which they interact with each other. I met a number a families coming to our foodbank centres who, in their own words, would describe a life where they lacked the resources, the local support, and the personal confidence to move out of their poverty trap. These were obviously inter-related for these families. If they had either, or both, some sense of personal worth or practical/financial local support from friends and family then their condition of poverty would not felt so helpless to them - and helpless they felt as they expressed their despair rather than sense of hope for anything different. Many of those who came into our foodbanks asked us how many times they could come

back for more support and then when we could help them again after the cut off (we allowed people four full weeks of food support). From many there was a palpable sense of relief when we explained that the agency who referred them to the foodbank could re-refer them again if their condition continued. Often all they could see was the next day and no further - they felt trapped within their immediate situation and had that triple cumulative disadvantage of not knowing where to get help, little support locally and a sense of feeling worthless.

2.3 Narratives that lock people into the 'web of poverty.'

Poverty and the effects of poverty upon people, society and the economy appear to take up a significant amount of daily media news. There are daily examples of newspapers and media outlets making judgements and value statements, or negative narratives, about those living in poverty which point to a state of impoverishment and disenfranchised citizenship for some. These narratives may not deny people opportunities or resources, nor create dysfunctional relationships in their lives, nor create low self-esteem. However, they do, as this thesis will demonstrate, create an environment where epistemic agency can easily be denied and through which people experience disenfranchisement. Poverty is multi-dimensional and therefore cannot simply be described as a condition within society. Whilst it is often measured in terms of household income, and a spectrum of assets owned, it is better described, within the developed world, as a 'position in society, the product of dynamic interactions among social groups and institutions.'⁷⁸ Relative poverty within the UK means not only that some people are worse off than the majority in society, but also that they experience multiple disadvantages becoming excluded and marginalised from full participation as citizens. This is because 'poverty affects different aspects of people's lives, existing when people are denied opportunities to work, to learn, to live healthy and fulfilling lives...'⁷⁹ Poverty is, therefore, a 'web' of interactions that impact cumulatively upon people. What can hold and trap people in this 'web of poverty' are ongoing negative narratives that maintain their position in society.

Despite these complex issues the UK government continues to utilise a uni-dimensional method deeming that an individual household is considered to be living in poverty if its

⁷⁸ Dasgupta, P. (1996). An Inquiry into Well-Being and Destitution. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p, 39.

⁷⁹ Department of Social Security. (1999). Opportunity for All: Tackling poverty and social exclusion. London: The Stationary Office., p, 23.

net income is below sixty percent of the national medium.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, this method measurement simply leaves people labelled, perhaps permanently, as living in poverty. The issue is further complicated when it is considered that government poverty data often assumes a level playing field with regard to inflation. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) analysed this assumption and discovered that those on lower income often experienced higher inflation, proportionately, than those on higher income.⁸¹ This dissonance has considerably greater impact upon those struggling to pay for food and bills with both small margins between income and expenditure and a lack of savings or resources to cope with the vicissitudes of a market economy.

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), in further research, chose to analyse those living in poverty compared with those who were not. They found that the latter would almost certainly live longer, have better health, better qualifications and a wider choice of opportunities. Their diagnosis of deprivation led them to identify a 'thick' description of pathways that not only led to poverty and impoverishment, but also held people captive within that state. These were: 'family breakdown, economic dependency and worklessness, educational failure, drug and alcohol addiction and serious personal debt.'⁸² These are the effects of people caught in a 'web' of poverty.

When I was overseeing Food-bank centres in Cornwall I met families on a weekly basis who themselves were buying fresh food on a daily basis because they either lacked the necessary refrigeration white-goods or could not afford the electricity to run them. This purchase of daily shopping was more expensive than the weekly supermarket purchase (bulk buying being cheaper than the daily purchase of the same items bought individually) and created an inability for those constantly struggling in poverty to plan a better budget and therefore save money for any future needs. However, outside of that 'thick' description, I observed both local people and newspapers criticizing these families for poor budgeting and blaming them for their own predicament.

⁸⁰ Office for National Statistics ONS. (2013). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2013-provisional-results/stb-ashe-statistical-bulletin-2013.html>. Online. This data shows that 'In April 2013 median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees were £517, up 2.2% from £506 in 2012.' The innate flaw in this method of measurement is thus, that whilst those living in poverty may find their income increasing, so, therefore, do those who are not. Therefore, this measurement leaves people labelled, perhaps permanently, as living in poverty.

⁸¹ Adams, A & Levell, P. (2014). Measuring poverty when inflation varies across households. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/measuring-poverty-inflation>. Online. 'The real cost of living went up 50 per cent for low-income households between 2002-03 and 2013-14, compared with 43 per cent for high-income households.'

⁸² Centre for Social Justice. (2015). Breakthrough Britain 2015 Policy Recommendation Reports. <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/policy/breakthrough-britain-ii-overview/breakthrough-britain-ii-overview>. Online.

2.4 Negative narratives that promote inequality.

Dorling argues that people are held in, and kept captive in, poverty by negative narratives that inhabits societal attitudes. These narrative contain powerful beliefs and world-views that create an environment in which inequalities and impoverishment become a reality that is acceptable. This leads to a normative attitude within society towards those who are poor that then maintains the place of those who are poor, thereby creating a *status quo* of injustice. In 'Inequality and the 1%' Dorling highlights that this situation goes beyond mere finances (these issues cannot be reduced to one of money) and that 'being born outside the 1% has a dramatic impact on a person's potential: reducing life expectancy, limiting educational and work prospects, and even affecting mental health.'⁸³ However, he does not suggest that this narrative is deliberate, created by a group of wilfully malicious people, rather that this narrative has subtly and invasively entered societal thinking and prevails as part of the normative narrative base from which people operate. He argues that this makes social change even harder, stating this:

Social inequality within rich countries persists because of a continued belief in the tenets of injustice, and it can be a shock for people to realize that there might be something wrong with much of the ideological fabric of the society we live in.⁸⁴

Often I would invite organisation, including documentary teams, to come to my parish and see the reality of social inequality for themselves. These small teams would come and interview a range of people in order to ascertain what some of the issues were. Each time the result, whilst different in actual content, was similar in outcome. Those who were struggling and living in poverty talked about how they felt trapped within their situation and could not see a way out, whilst others who were not struggling could not understand why the former could not simply work harder or smarter or simply 'get a job'. Rarely did anyone, who was interviewed, suggest that the system might structurally be at fault and in need of changing.

This is an inequality gap that locks people into a fixed location, and a repeating narrative, of impoverishment where opportunities, resources, health and the space to create functional relationships are held out of their grasp. Poverty, therefore, becomes more about inequality than access to medicine, housing or food; it also becomes a place of opportunity impoverishment and truncated citizenship. Moreover the socially

⁸³ Dorling, D. (2014). *Inequality and the 1%*. London: Verso Books., p, 23.

⁸⁴ Dorling, D. (2011). *Injustice. Why social inequality persists*. Great Britain: Hobbs., p, 13.

destructive and complex 'web' of problems that exist in the wealthy countries are more likely to be: 'levels of trust, mental illness (including drug and alcohol addiction), life expectancy and infant mortality, obesity, children's educational performance, teenage births, homicides, imprisonment rates, social mobility.'⁸⁵ The effects of this inequality gap are shown to be proportionately more severe upon people living in poverty in the wealthiest countries than upon poor people living in poorer countries.⁸⁶

In 2012 the BBC reported on a pertinent example of this inequality gap leading to impoverishment in a startling picture of life expectancy across London. A researcher, at the UCL Department of Geography, created a 'tube-map' picture,⁸⁷ using data collated by the Office for National Statistics, which demonstrated the devastating effects of social inequality. The headline story said that 'it shows there is a 20-year difference in life expectancy between those born near Oxford Circus and others born close to some stations on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR).'⁸⁸ Marmot's⁸⁹ extensive empirical research was in concord with these ongoing structural failings in the UK stating that these maintain inequality and keep people captive in impoverishment. The dissonance between the reality of Britain's place as one of the wealthiest countries in the world and the inability of all its people to benefit from that is, therefore, considerable. A further step into a 'thick' description of impoverishment in London can be seen in a letter sent by Whitehall government-employed cleaners to cabinet members of the Coalition Government.

In their latest letter, the cleaners wrote: "We work hard to keep the offices of Government clean but we are paid less than it costs to live. This means we have to make painful sacrifices like not spending time with our children because we...can't even afford to take the Tube to and from work."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Wilkinson, R & Pickett, K. (2009). The Spirit Level. Why Equality is better for everyone. Great Britain: Clays Ltd., p, 19.

⁸⁶ This view is in concord with the following United Nations report which states that 'inequality reduces the pace of human development and in some cases may even prevent it entirely. This is most marked for inequality in health and education...where the effects are more substantial in high and very high HDI (wealthy) countries.' UN Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Report 2013. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/514850672.html>. Online., p, 29.

⁸⁷ Journal article reference: Cheshire, J A. Lives on the Line: Mapping Life Expectancy Along the London Tube Network. Environment and Planning A44(7). Doi: 10.1068/a45341.

⁸⁸ BBC News. (20th July 2012). Tube map used to plot Londoners' life expectancy. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-18917932>. Online.

⁸⁹ Marmot is the Director of the International Institute for Society and Health, and MRC Research Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London. Marmot, M. (2006). Health in an unequal world. Lancet 368: 2081–2094.

⁹⁰ London Evening Standard News. (2nd July 2013). Article: 'Dear Ministers, please pay us a living wage, your cleaners.' <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/dear-ministers-please-pay-us-a-living-wage-your-cleaners-8683100.html>. Online.

This clearly demonstrates a correlation between the inequality gap and an impoverished life for those who receive the lowest income. However, impoverishment, as a cumulative effect of a poverty 'web', is a difficult concept to describe. I have personally seen it a number of times and can only describe it as the phenomenon that when you look into the eyes of someone impoverished you can see that there is no 'fight' left within them. Often families coming into foodbank for the first time would walk in with their head and shoulders down and apologise for bothering the staff with their need. Some would break down in tears of desperation and exhaustion; often they would need someone to sit with them for a while, provide them with tea and biscuits as they were often hungry, and then finally work through the practicalities of their family's food requirements. People often entered our foodbanks and would express how they felt as though they were no longer fully human.

Tirado encapsulates how it feels as she writes passionately about her own life, lived in poverty, that existed somewhere between shame and vulnerability. She said there is 'almost nothing more degrading than standing in a welfare line. The people who are looking at you know how poor you have to be to qualify.'⁹¹ This is difficult to empirically quantify. However, it can be likened to a 'stripping away' of self, identity and any epistemic credit in the eyes of others. This is helpful description of what happens within the person themselves, and amongst the perpetrating group, when someone is made a scapegoat and, thereby, shunned and effectively criminalized for simply living in poverty.

The level of impoverishment and the complexities of the 'web' of poverty experienced by some families in Britain, by British standards, were highlighted by the report 'The Millennium Survey.' Some of its significant, and shocking, findings were as follows:

around five million adults and three quarters of a million children go without essential clothing...around three million adults and 400,000 children are not properly fed by today's standards...more than 12 million people are financially insecure. They cannot afford to save or insure their house contents.⁹²

As a parish priest I have gathered together over the last decade, with help from congregations, second hand furniture and white-goods numerous times for families on benefits, who having experienced theft or a house fire could not afford to replace these

⁹¹ Tirado, L. (2014). Hand to Mouth. The Truth about being poor in a wealthy world. London: Virago Press., p. 53.

⁹² Gordon, D., Levitas, R., Pantazis, C., ed. (2000). Report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain. The Millenium Survey. Bristol University: The Policy Press., p. 2.

goods and had no contents insurance. When asked why they did not have such insurance they responded, in different ways, that they never had enough regular disposable income to enjoy such benefits as insurance. In response to my question I often heard this telling answer: 'you must be laughing!' These forms of impoverishment are the very real effects of the 'web' of relative poverty in Britain today. This impoverishment curtails people's epistemic credit in society and truncates their citizenship in that excluded condition already referred to: a scapegoat.

2.5 A narrative of stereotyping.

The reality for those living in poverty is that whether due to a lack of resources, or to actual and deliberate exclusion by others, is that they find themselves excluded from opportunities, resources and participation in wider society. This exclusion or truncated citizenship is often outside the individual's control and beyond their personal means to effect any meaningful change in their circumstances. This may begin as a consequence of poverty and low income, but other factors such as discrimination, low educational attainment and depleted opportunities underpin it. Through this process people can be cut off for a significant period in their lives from support services and institutions. This can also lead to divided lives, divided spaces and divided communities which in turn may lead to the fragmentation of society itself. What effects one part of society can affect the whole.

Whilst an understandably fairer policy suggestion would look to increasing numbers of those excluded moved into the included,⁹³ there is a far more complex Biblical stance that should be considered: to exclude the phenomenon of exclusion altogether. Within this phenomenon is a considerable barrier, which lies at the heart of this thesis, that stereotyping creates a powerful narrative which locks groups into a state of exclusion - as scapegoats.

Stereotyping adds strength to the perceived necessity and narrative to keep that group excluded and creates a powerful argument for a phenomenon called 'wilful blindness' or selective hearing towards any data to the contrary or voices who would challenge the unjust status quo. Social psychologists, researching the issues inherent within stereotyping and prejudice, argue that it is difficult to form a prejudice against someone without first forming a stereotype about them. 'Stereotypes have important societal implications because they create a variety of social difficulties and problems for those

⁹³ Byrne, D. 2nd Edition. (2009). Social Exclusion. Glasgow: Bell & Bain Ltd., p, 77. 'Exclusion is not simply a matter of crossing a line, but of moving significantly upwards in the income distribution.'

who are stereotyped.⁹⁴ These social attitudes manifest themselves in one group asserting its superiority, perhaps initially only in their thinking, over another group. This can lead to a judgement of who is better, or more worthy, or more deserving than the other. Bosch encapsulated a Biblical response to this phenomenon stating that ‘we are not the “haves”, the *beauty possidentes*, standing over against spiritual “have nots”, the *massa damnata*. We are all recipients of the same mercy, sharing in the same mystery.’⁹⁵ Stereotyping can be destructive in that it can lead to prejudice, which in turn can lead to negative action or discrimination.⁹⁶ In Christian terms it is clearly wrong and requires the Church⁹⁷ to respond appropriately to it as a destructive social attitude. Jones,⁹⁸ once a relatively unknown newspaper columnist, wrote a book about ‘Chavs’ that became both acclaimed and politically controversial. It explored the hypothesis that people living in poverty in the UK were becoming scapegoats for other people’s problems. The core of his book looked at negative narratives or stereotypes, which he had located within the print and online media, which were directed at those considered to be ‘poor’ or ‘chavs.’ The acronym ‘CHAV’ was first used, as a part of a wider negative narrative against people living on benefits, to describe those who lived in ‘council housing and were violent’⁹⁹; arguably a derogatory and devaluing stereotype that sought to deliberately deride the targeted group. It was not an accidental phrase and was created to both scapegoat and demonize working class people. His work demonstrated numerous negative narratives, that predominantly came from the print media, that were directed at those living in poverty. These were shown to be highly prevalent in one particular national daily newspaper: *The Daily Mail*. As shown in the previous chapter the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) regularly conducts research into social attitudes often utilising the data collated by Natcen (Britain’s largest independent social research agency). Some of these reports examined both the source of the negative narratives towards poverty, and the power of

⁹⁴ Stangor, C., & O'Brien, J. (2010). Stereotyping. In J. Levine, & M. Hogg (Eds.), Encyclopedia of group processes & intergroup relations. (pp. 857-862). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., p, 857.

⁹⁵ Bosch, D. (2002). Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. New York: Orbis Books., p, 484.

⁹⁶ See: Allport, G. (1979). Gordon Allport, a leading social psychologist, studied the root causes and properties of discrimination. His research demonstrated an ongoing irrationality in human behaviour that could arise from upbringing, culture, tabloid stereotyping and the forceful act of scapegoating.

⁹⁷ NIV Bible. (2009). Zechariah 7:9-10. "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'"

⁹⁸ See: Jones, O. (2012). Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class. Sweden: Scandbook AB.

⁹⁹ BBC News. (3rd June, 2011). Why is 'chav' still controversial? <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-13626046>. Online.

communication with regard to the tone, style and manner in which that narrative is communicated. One such report¹⁰⁰ examined the challenging question of why members of the public, once shown the empirical data for poverty in the UK, chose not believe that poverty was a significant issue and even used ‘anti-poverty’ language in their responses when interviewed. These interviews, conducted by the JRF, provided a qualitative narrative from the interviewees who, themselves, disagreed with the validity of the empirical data on poverty. Those interviewed consistently placed people in three out of four ‘camps.’ These were as follows:

*people were labelled as living in poverty as either ‘scroungers;’
or ‘those who refused to work;’
or as the ‘deserving poor’ (those who really could not support themselves such
as the permanently disabled).*

However, those interviewed would not consider that there could be people in this fourth camp:

*those who both worked hard and were still both poor and lived an impoverished
life.*

This phenomenon demonstrates that a strong stereotype was firmly in place that directed the interviewee to accept and promote a negative narrative with a high level of ‘wilful blindness.’¹⁰¹ A choice to be blind to a possibility that there could not be anything wrong with the current economic or political system.

Goffman, a prominent sociologist in the twentieth century, conducted considerable qualitative research into the stigma and stereotypes that labels some individuals and groups as discredited and, thereby, disqualified from society when they do not, or seem not to, conform to social norms. This disqualification also means that any ‘voice’, from those living in impoverishment, that speaks out against their situation can more easily be dismissed; especially when that ‘voice’ has already been demeaned to a level of respect lower than that afforded to those who fit the norm. Goffman explains how a stigma operates in society saying that

¹⁰⁰ Castell, S & Thompson, J. (2007). Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report: Understanding attitudes to poverty in the UK. Getting the public’s attention. An examination of the barriers to public acceptance of poverty and inequality problems in the UK. York: York Publishing Services Ltd.

¹⁰¹ See: Heffernan, M. (2012). Wilful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious. London: Simon & Schuster Ltd. Heffernan, an award winning author, television producer and corporate chief executive, examines the ability of human beings to deliberately ignore significant social issues regardless of the empirical evidence and choose to believe a position contrary to the data presented to them. This, again, highlights the power of narrative in people’s lives, their attitudes and therefore the decisions or behaviours that they personally make and exhibit or support.

we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority...sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class.¹⁰²

The JRF also highlighted this significant issue of 'stigma', for those living in poverty in the UK, using the following acronym: LOLI. They suggest that increasing numbers of people, in Britain, find themselves living a life with 'low opportunity and low income' (LOLI)...which would include the following: 'daily debt...low/insecure wages...indirect taxation – poorer people pay more at the point of sale than the rest of us...poor housing...no safety nets.'¹⁰³ What compounds this impoverishment is then the stereotyping and stigmatization of this group. The JRF, as part of their empirical research, also discovered that there are an increasing group of people who rather than being part of a supportive narrative that seeks to bring those living in poverty back into the fold of society, sought instead to castigate, demonize and blame. With some level of agreement, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) also discussed a group of people who appear in the 'LOLI' category. The CSJ report called 'Signed Off, Written Off' painted a dark picture saying this:

there is a raging fire that no one has yet come close to putting out...ghettos of deep dependency continue to devastate pockets of British communities – some neighbourhoods have more than 50 per cent of people of working-age claiming out of work benefits and social housing locks people into areas of low employment.¹⁰⁴

Those who are on the lowest incomes approach banks and lenders, utility companies and agencies from a position of weakness. They have little or no collateral and may have no savings or external support to fall back upon. This is a phenomenon that can be described as a 'poverty premium'¹⁰⁵ where those who are poorest pay considerably, and proportionately, more for good and services, for loans and overdrafts, and food and clothes. I remember observing 'cold-callers' going from house to house on very deprived council estates in my parish. They were offering immediate loans of money with extortionate rates of interest. I, having noticed that they never called on me or

¹⁰² Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma Notes on Management: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity. London: Simon & Schuster., p, 44.

¹⁰³ Castell, S & Thompson, J. (2007)., pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁴ The Centre for Social Justice Report. (2013). Signed On, Written Off. An inquiry into welfare dependency in Britain.

[http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJ_Signed_On_Written_Off_full_report-WEB-2-\(2\).pdf](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJ_Signed_On_Written_Off_full_report-WEB-2-(2).pdf). Online., p, 12.

¹⁰⁵ The Centre for Social Justice Report. (2013). Maxed Out. Serious personal debt in Britain. <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/maxed-out>. Online., p, 45.

houses near my vicarage, asked some of these cold callers why they went to some areas and not others. The answer was always the same: poorer estates do not have access to cheap overdrafts or loans, middle class estates do. Clearly a lack of access to resources, services and good can, and does, lead to impoverishment - a devastating effect of the 'web' of poverty.

The situation that groups of people in the UK are living an impoverished life, compared with others around them, is undeniable; the reality that parts of society castigate those living in poverty is clear. What is needed next is a new analysis of these negative narratives and specifically with regard to those that appear to exist within the print media.

2.6 Concluding thoughts.

The first part of this thesis, utilising The Pastoral Cycle 'See', has highlighted a number of attitudes towards those living in poverty that can only be described as stereotypes that are prejudicial. Lott, argued that forms of negative narratives are a way in which society wilfully, and knowingly, acts in a manner that distances itself from groups such as the poor. The social act, itself, of giving the poor both negative and demeaning stereotypes means that society can then justify avoidance and mute their voice.

Concluding her research on American society Lott said this: the 'misconceptions created by the middle-class of the poor are...(that they are)...“uneducated, unmotivated, lazy, unpleasant, angry, stupid, dirty, immoral, criminal, alcoholic, abusive, and violent.”’¹⁰⁶

The Church has a Biblical responsibility to respond to this destructive social issue. In chapter three this thesis turns, utilising the Pastoral Cycle: 'Social Analysis', to examine the British print media in order to analyse this challenging and worrying phenomenon in the public sphere.

¹⁰⁶ Lott, R. (February 2002). Cognitive and Behavioral Distancing From the Poor. American Psychologist 57.2., p, 103.

Chapter 3. 'Judge' - A social analysis on the Media.

rather than mobilise to enfranchise the poor, society has generally found it easier to stigmatise, mock and even fear them. This relieves the guilt as sense of responsibility for the plight of other human beings...the poor could succeed if they choose to do so. They don't deserve help because they drink, smoke, shirk and often turn to violence...they should certainly not be indulged – that would just reward the bad behaviour that got them into their corner in the first place!¹⁰⁷

3.1 Introduction.

The media is a key source of influence in people's lives in terms of its daily columns. How the story of poverty is presented can mould the way in which people both relate to and then react to it. Arguably newspapers, as a key component in that influence, have a shared responsibility in this arena. However, the reality is that they both reinforce social attitudes and also reflecting what society is probably already thinking. Whilst research into this area continues to fall short of proving any direct causation,¹⁰⁸ the media still provides a clear opportunity to conduct a valid social analysis.

Newspapers often present their narrative as authoritative offering the views of 'experts' in their field. However, the reality is that each story told is re-told through a lens held by a small group of writers, with an editor, and then repackaged as the truth about a particular situation or group. This does not mean that newspapers are not objective or that they deliberately attempt to deceive people. However, there is good empirical research showing that there is bias within the media.¹⁰⁹ The manner in which those who are living in poverty are portrayed by the press may affect or reinforce public understanding and attitudes. It is important that this is explored and that any negative narratives are retrieved from the text, brought together in themes and then analysed.

¹⁰⁷ Hutton, W. (2011). Them and Us. Changing Britain. Why we need a fair society. London: Abacus., p, 291.

¹⁰⁸ For example, in 1997 'New Labour' won a land-slide victory in the General Elections. There was a public belief that this was due to the Sun newspaper giving its unequivocal support to the Labour Party during the run up to the election. Research after the event showed that 'securing the support of The Sun may well have been a psychological boost for Mr. Blair. Our analysis suggests it may even have secured him a few votes. But it was not The Sun wot won it in 1997.' Curtice, J. (1999). Was it the Sun wot won it again? The influence of newspapers in the 1997 election campaign. Working Paper No. 75. The Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends. Oxford: University of Oxford., p, 31.

¹⁰⁹ Platt, A. (2010). From Sin to Sickness: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Four Major American Newspapers' Representations of Alcoholism. New York: University of New York. Platt conducted empirical research into newspapers and their portrayal of alcoholism in New York. Her research demonstrated that the American press were biased in their narratives and often promoted punishment for offenders with little narrative on alcoholism as an illness or the need for treatment.

This thesis also looked for any dominant narratives¹¹⁰ about the poor that may embed negative perceptions within societal attitudes. The global village created by social media makes the study of narratology increasingly important by today's research bodies.

Narratives can be used to pass on values, tell truth, persuade, cajole, discriminate and isolate. Therefore, it matters what narrative people retell as it can have a wider impact on how one group views another.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) conducts, as this thesis has already shown, annual research into British social issues including poverty. Another recent report conducted by them examined the relationship between the UK media and the public with regard to their perception and attitudes towards poverty. This was the second time that a large-scale analysis of the media in the UK has been conducted. The first was published in 1982, a landmark report,¹¹¹ that demonstrated through a qualitative analysis of several newspapers that there had been a rise in hostile narratives directed at those who were living in poverty in Britain. In 2008 JRF produced their report, similar in nature, that analysed over '150 newspapers, over 100 radio news programmes, over 75 television news programmes...over a study week.'¹¹² The JRF discovered that in terms of media coverage poverty, as an issue in its own right, was rarely at the centre of the news story. Instead it was attached to another item such as politics or benefit fraud and rarely stood on its own. In addition, 'the tendency for negative reporting of 'the poor', particularly in the tabloid press, was seen to be a clear element of coverage... connections between poverty and anti-social behaviour are never far from the centre of debate.'¹¹³ Newspapers appear, at times, to trivialise and marginalise personal accounts of people living in poverty. There are also occasions when the stories they publish demonise individuals and groups. This may be in order to maintain the energy for a story and look for scandal within the details. The narrative that the media decides to portray is important because, to an extent, 'the media orientates the reader and viewer to their world'... 'and they are able to cast certain actions, and indeed certain persons, as marginal and even evil.'¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Heath, L. Impact of newspaper crime reports on fear of crime: Multi-methodological investigation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 47(2), Aug 1984. Pp. 263-276. Heath, a psychology professor in Chicago, conducted considerable research into the way that the media shapes public influence and often with a dominant narrative that sensationalises or trivializes the subject matter.

¹¹¹ Goulding, P & Middleton, S. (1982). Images of Welfare: Press and Public Attitudes to Poverty. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

¹¹² McKendrick, J et al. (2008). The media, poverty and public opinion in the UK. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/system/files/2224-poverty-media-opinion.pdf>. Online., p, 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* (2008)., p, 41.

¹¹⁴ Silverstone, R. (2007). Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis. Cambridge: Polity Press.,

Narrative is powerful not only in influencing opinions, but also in its effect upon the recipients of the types of negative narratives examined so far. A research study in America which interviewed those on the receiving end of negative narratives were clearly ‘cognizant of their stigmatized status...most claimed that criticism had been directed at them personally.’¹¹⁵ Research conducted in the UK reveals that the same issues occur here. Some are rendered voiceless and ‘people experiencing poverty in the UK are often under-represented and misrepresented in the media. There are undoubtedly opportunities to challenge and change this so that they may be properly seen and heard.’¹¹⁶

3.2 The influence of narrative in the media.

In each and every different column a newspaper tells a different story. These differ in style, content and the effect they are attempting to have upon the reader. In addition, each and every reader has a variety of personal narratives that they inhabit. These range from the way in which we do habitual tasks, to whom we vote for, to the type of people we feel comfortable being with. These narratives, small and large, shape how we make decisions, the directions our lives take and the way in which we respond to others around us. Brueggemann¹¹⁷ argues that narrative is an extraordinary force in society. In an interview he spoke passionately about this significant issue in postmodernity saying,

I think that narratives construct the world for us and dictate policy and practice, and I think that our society is often living by a false narrative...So it seems to me the challenge for the Church is to see whether we can show we have a better narrative...¹¹⁸

In order for a text to become a narrative that has power, the author needs to have focalized their intentions. It requires intentionality in the choice of opinions and the perspective taken upon the agents described and the interactions between them. This is, arguably, a common practise for journalists writing newspaper articles. Bal says that

p, 71.

¹¹⁵ Secombe, K, Delors, J & Walters, K. (1998). “They think you ain’t much of nothing”: The social construction of the welfare mother. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Vol. 60, November., p, 854.

¹¹⁶ Robinson, F, Else, R, Sherlock, M & Zass-Ogilvie. (2009). Poverty in the Media. Being seen and getting heard. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/39316/download?token=O0B4JMFm>. Online., p, 33.

¹¹⁷ See: Brueggemann, W. (2001). The Prophetic Imagination. London: Fortress Press. Brueggemann, a scholar and theologian, is perhaps one of the most influential current Old Testament scholars in the world.

¹¹⁸ Interview (2010).

‘this is a slanted...subjective nature of storytelling which is inevitable.’¹¹⁹ Whether this is always deliberate or not in any particular narrative may forever be a subjective question as all conversation, verbal and non-verbal, requires translation.¹²⁰ It can, therefore, be argued that in the journey from the person interviewed, to the *Daily Mail* reporter, to the column writer and then to the reader meaning and intent may be lost or misunderstood.

One manner of using this to one’s advantage, and to another’s disadvantage, is to determine the distance from which the reader can visualize the ‘other.’ Depending upon the level of description, the use of language and the choice of morphology and syntax, the story can show a distant and far off culture that differs greatly from ‘ours’. That deceptive vision is, precisely, the ‘basis of ethnocentrism.’¹²¹ The ‘truth’ within this ‘fiction’ of causation (Abbott coined this trap ‘fictional truth’¹²²) may be based in isolated or anecdotal events where the reader may have experienced a singular example of this event happening. These individual snapshot experiences then become normalized and feed into the narrative of the normal which become an everyday occurrence in their personal narrative. This will be clearly demonstrated in the analysis, to come, of the many negative narratives found within the *Daily Mail*. These *fictional truths* can become attached as a socially accepted label for a group of people. Hence we see the creation of an ethno-centric trap. It is, therefore, at this point in this thesis possible to state the following substantive statement:

the rhetoric of narrative is its power. It has to do with all those elements of the text that produce the many strong or subtle combinations of feelings and thought we experience as we read...it is no exaggeration, then, to call narrative an instrument of power.¹²³

Whether it is examination of the media in print or online it is clear that ‘ideological...and psychological relationships can occur in many *fabulas*...black against white, men against women, employers against employees, ‘haves’ against ‘have-

¹¹⁹ Bal, M. (2009). Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative. (Third Edition). London: University of Toronto Press., p, 145.

¹²⁰ See: Gadamer, H-G. (2004). Truth and Method. 2nd rev. edition. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad., p, 386. There is always a ‘gap between the spirit of the original words and that of their reproduction...it is a gap that can never be completely closed.’

¹²¹ *Ibid.* (2009)., p, 158.

¹²² Abbott, H. (2013). The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p, 153. Abbott’s research consistently demonstrates that narrative is not only powerful in its influence in daily life, but that it is to be found everywhere in the ordinary and daily.

¹²³ *Ibid.* (2013)., p, 40.

nots', conformists against individualists, the 'normal' against the 'insane.'¹²⁴ It is, according to Bal, the manner in which the language of narrative is structured and re-constructed that creates a trap for the unwary or undiscerning reader. Whilst Abbott's phrase 'fictional truth' may appear to be a contradiction within itself there is a poignant challenge here within the study of narrative. A 'fictional truth' first takes ideas that may be anecdotal and part of societal attitudes. These ideas are then added into the text in order to 'saturate not just the content of any narrative but its architecture...even though some of these ideas may be dangerously wrong. Yet large segments of the fiction-consuming public might well say "How true!"'¹²⁵ From the analysis of the *Daily Mail* it will be clearly shown that there are aspects of the negative narratives directed at those living in poverty that can be described as 'fictional truths.' These stereotypes have been wilfully and deliberately shaped against groups and individuals, and have been applied to the world as if they were true everywhere and for everyone.

3.3 Methodology: Thematic Analysis.

There has not yet been any significant qualitative analysis of the *Daily Mail* and its use of negative narrative directed at those living in poverty in the UK. This is, therefore, an original piece of research and offers a new and additional insight into research already discussed alongside any future studies conducted by others. A qualitative approach has been chosen over a quantitative methodology because the former is more effective in drawing out the 'thick' data as it 'examines the relationship between the text and its likely audience meaning, recognizing that media texts are *polysemic*.'¹²⁶ The Thematic Analysis method used takes raw data (newspaper stories taken from multiple and randomly drawn daily editions) and separates it into several different components. There is often too much data to analyse and, therefore, it needs to be broken into sub-sections that begin with main headings that then branch off into sub-sections in order to ascertain the depths, or otherwise, that the newspaper narratives go to. These are basic language phrases or key words that set the direction for the reading of the raw data. Society can judge situations and people in a variety of ways and through differing vehicles. In chapter one there were a number of negative narratives examined from two public research papers. These provided much helpful insight into the actuality of the

¹²⁴ Bal, M. (2009)., p, 213.

¹²⁵ Abbott, H. (2013)., pp.153-154.

¹²⁶ Macnamara, J. (2005). Media content analysis: Its uses, benefits and best practice methodology. Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal 6 (1), 1-34., p, 5. He conducted considerable empirical research into the language that the media uses.

issue. The second of these reports, 'The lies we tell ourselves', drew out negative narratives from a broad range of national newspapers. These were that:

- **The poor are lazy and just don't want to work,**
- **The poor are addicted to drink and drugs,**
- **The poor are not really poor – they just don't manage their money properly,**
- **The poor are on the fiddle,**
- **The poor have an easy life on benefits.**

In this chapter these five key claims (note the key phrases above in bold type), acted as the initial markers and search criteria for what now follows: a qualitative thematic analysis conducted on multiple copies of one national newspaper, the *Daily Mail*. Each one of these five stereotypes, in bold type, will be used as the initial themes when selecting headlines and articles to then analyse thematically.

Braun and Clarke¹²⁷ in 2006 began to promote Thematic Analysis (TA) as a valid, reliable and systematic method in the analysis of qualitative data. TA, because of its flexibility, has the potential to 'provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data...as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data.'¹²⁸

However, the method needs parameters that not only define and valid it, but also refrain from curtailing its inherent flexibility.

Qualitative data collection and analysis often involves considerable information for the researcher to work through and is a matter of interpretation which makes the method chosen so important. Boyatzis argues that TA gives the researcher scope to examine large amounts of data, whilst interpreting and drawing links between different aspects of the data. This provides a systematic approach to presenting themes and patterns drawn out¹²⁹ as the analysis moves well simply counting words and examines ideas and concepts the emerge.

The hallmark of TA is its flexibility whereby the coding can either begin inductively and drawn out from the data itself or the themes can be predetermined from another source and be brought to the data. It also allows the researcher to focus upon patterns emerging from a variety of people or sources. 'Most of the recoverable information about human

¹²⁷ See: Braun, V and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3 (2)., pp. 77-101.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* (2006)., pp, 5-6.

¹²⁹ See: Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

thought and behaviour in complex societies is naturally occurring text: books, magazines, and newspapers...all these things come to us raw, in qualitative form.'¹³⁰

Therefore, this method is both relevant and valid for analysing the large number of newspaper articles, from the *Daily Mail*, written by a number of journalists and concerning a range of different people across a spectrum of contexts.

This thesis does not use inductive thematic analysis because there is a clear understanding, in advance, of what themes are being searched for. TA can approach the entire body of data with predetermined themes¹³¹ with which to then select and reduce the qualitative data that will then be placed within the coding framework, and sub-themes, in order to then be analysed. Therefore, utilising theoretical thematic analysis, this thesis examines whether or not the pre-selected themes are present and prevalent in the qualitative data analysed. This thesis looks at underlying issues and patterns that are latent within and across the entire qualitative material selected from the *Daily Mail*. In its exploration of the *Daily Mail* this thesis examines the manner in which people construct their understanding of the world around them using the vehicle of language. The negative narratives explored can be seen as a social construct or invention. A socially constructed notion or concept within peoples' thinking and language which may appear perfectly natural and normal to them, but does not necessarily reflect the reality of the situation it concerns. Language is a powerfully influential vehicle for these relative and constructed ideas to evolve over time, 'being negotiated, sustained and modified'¹³², creating a reality that people inhabit and the beliefs that they hold to be true. This process is called Social Constructionism¹³³ and is a social process whereby these constructs are created through interactions between people. These interactions form a reality that is 'socially defined...as a subjective experience of everyday life'¹³⁴ as people try to make sense of the world around them. This process allows the subjective to be re-formed and re-created as objective truth in the daily 'routinization and habitualization'¹³⁵ that occurs within society. This theory holds that people need a

¹³⁰ Bernard, H. R. (2011). Research Methods in Anthropology. Qualitative and quantitative approaches. 5th edition. New York: Altamira Press., p, 463.

¹³¹ Ely, M. Vinz, R. Downing, M. & Anzul, M. (1997). On writing qualitative research: living by words. London: Routledge/Falmer., p, 206.

¹³² Schwandt, T. A. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry. In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y (Eds.), The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and issues. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage., Pp. 292-331., p, 299.

¹³³ See: Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1991). The Social Construction of Reality. London: Penguin Books.

¹³⁴ Steedman, P. (2000). On the relations between seeing, interpreting and knowing. In Steier, F. (Ed.) Research and Reflexivity. (pp. 53-62). London: Sage., p, 61.

¹³⁵ Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1991)., p, 84.

foundation of socially constructed beliefs and patterns of behaviour, held to be true, in order to be able operate and function on a daily basis. These social constructs both enable people to innovate, but also to remain and stagnate within attitudes that do not necessarily reflect reality.

It is language that can act as a powerful vehicle for beliefs and attitudes to travel between individuals and by which social constructs can become known and held to be true across groups in society. The media is a powerful conduit in this process as newspapers often 'present themselves and their version of events in such a way that it will prevail over other versions.'¹³⁶ Each newspaper can present their version as true and lay claim to having jurisdiction to truth.

When TA is used well it should demonstrate something about what the data means and offer implications for the patterns discerned. It should not simply offer a report of what has been collated. There should be both extracts from the data that feed into larger analytical descriptions which proffer interpretations of both distinctive and overlapping themes. TA should enable a story to be told about the data which it did not tell prior to the analysis. Braun and Clarke¹³⁷ state that each item of data must receive equal attention and that the initial themes should be selected carefully not only for being comprehensive and inclusive, but also for their coherence, consistency and distinctive nature. The data should be analysed and interpreted, rather than simply para-phrased demonstrating that the data extracts match the analytical claims made.

An important aspect of theoretical TA is having clear themes to approach the data with. These themes, being chosen in order that they can reflect the widest narrative possible, should be able to draw out a number of aspects from the large amount of data examined. Whilst this approach organises and describes the data set in rich detail, it frequently it goes further than this and 'interprets various aspects of the research topic.'¹³⁸ TA has three main stages that include 'data reduction, data display and then data conclusion drawing.'¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Burr, V. (2003). Social Constructionism. (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge., p, 35.

¹³⁷ See: Braun, V & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), Handbook of Research Methods of Psychology. Vol. 2: Research Designs, pp. 57-71. Washington, DC: APA Books.

¹³⁸ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3: 77-101., p, 79.

¹³⁹ Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook. London: Sage Publications., p, 12.

3.3.1 Stages in Thematic Analysis.

Stage 1: Data reduction. This is ‘a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that “final” conclusion can be drawn and verified.’¹⁴⁰ It is the coding process in TA which takes the raw data and assigns it to the themes, and sub themes, or discards it. The advantage of using TA is found within the flexibility of the coding framework. Used well it provides the structure for connections and patterns, between different parts of the data, to begin to emerge and form a more cohesive narrative. It is during this process that interpretation and analysis begins as the analytical narrative begins to develop. This first stage, data reduction, can be broken down further into three sub stages:

1. The researcher reads the data several times in order to 'get a feel for the text by handling the data multiple times.'¹⁴¹
2. The researcher makes constant reference to the initial question and the main themes preselected so that data is appropriately selected as the researcher methodically goes through the text 'marking them up with different coloured highlighter pens.'¹⁴²
3. The final process, prior to placing reduced and selected data into the coding framework, focusses upon the initial data that is re-read to ensure nothing has been missed that should have been selected. Anything that has been missed is placed alongside that which has been highlighted already for coding. Finally, that which has been highlighted is checked again against the main themes.

Stage 2: Data display. This relates to 'the organized, compressed assembly of information'¹⁴³ in order that sense can be made of the data as it is analysed and interpreted. Data, due to the flexible nature of TA, can be displayed in a number of different ways. Ideally the reduced data that has been selected should be put into a coding framework that is in 'an accessible and compact form so that the analyst can see what's happening...and draw justified conclusions.'¹⁴⁴ It is in this 'displaying' of the reduced and selected data that concepts and patterns emerge. Therefore, the technique chosen for the 'displaying' is highly important. These can include tables, charts, text, graphs et al. However, the technique chosen for this thesis was Buzan's method of displaying large amounts of data called Mind Mapping. This method, and the rationale

¹⁴⁰ Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994)., p, 11.

¹⁴¹ Ryan, G. W. & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. Field Methods 15(1). February 2003, pp. 85–109. DOI: 10.1177/1525822X02239569., p. 85.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* (2003)., p, 101.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* (1994)., p, 11.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (1994)., p, 11.

for its use, is explained in some detail below.

Stage 3: Data drawing and conclusions. In this final stage the researcher examines the groups of information that have a similar narrative in order to identify patterns that emerge within the different themes and that cut across them. This allows an analysis to take place which will tell a valid and accurate story about the data and the impact it has upon the thesis with regard to the overall research question. The analysis draws upon extracts to support that story whilst retaining the complex richness and depth inherent within qualitative data.

The purpose of the analysis is not only to uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion, but also to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for these negative narratives. A reliable and in-depth analysis can then lead onto insights in the problem itself, whilst also providing suggestions for further research. Whilst any findings will not be final in their conclusion they will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the issue.

3.3.2 Mind Mapping.

Concept mapping¹⁴⁵ can be an effective technique for displaying complex relationships and patterns among and between themes. These are visual maps that can demonstrate the presence of hierarchies, connections and anomalies. One effective method of mapping concepts and ideas found within data examined within qualitative research is Mind mapping.¹⁴⁶

'Mind maps are diagrams used to represent words, ideas...and are structurally more flexible'¹⁴⁷ being able to display relationships and patterns clearly and concisely. The method offers a different approach to managing rich data associated with analysing qualitative research. It, as a tool for analysing qualitative data, is increasingly being used more widely within qualitative research in education, health and by universities.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See: Stewart, J., Kirk, J., Rowell, R. (1979). Concept Maps. American Biology Teacher, Vol. 41(3)., pp. 171-175.

¹⁴⁶ See: Buzan, T. & Abbott, S. (2005). The Ultimate Book of Mind-Maps. London: Thorsons. A Mind Map is a powerful graphic technique. It harnesses the full range of cortical skills – word, image, number, logic, rhythm, colour and spatial awareness – in a single, uniquely powerful manner.

¹⁴⁷ Wheeldon, J. (2011). Is a picture worth a thousand words? Using Mind Maps in qualitative research. The Qualitative report. Vol. 16. No. 2., pp. 509-522., p. 510.

¹⁴⁸ See: Tattersall, C., Watts, A., & Vernon, S. (2007). Mindmapping as a tool in qualitative research. Nursing Times, 103(26)., pp. 32-33. who state that 'the Mind map is a powerful graphic technique.', p. 33. Also see: Wheeldon, J. P., & Faubert, J. (2009). Framing experience: Concept maps, mind maps, and data collection in qualitative research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8(3), pp. 68-83. who state that 'Although the use of Mind maps is a relatively new phenomenon, they provide a useful and novel way to communicate meaning and knowledge.', p. 78.

However, with regard to its limitations there is an issue of validity. The researcher decides which data to place where, when to create sub-sections and what to label them. It is 'human judgement plays a major part in the construction of the mind map.'¹⁴⁹ Practically the map should be on one sheet of paper which can keep being enlarged in size, by being added to with additional sheets, depending upon the amount of data being placed within its framework as part of the coding process. This means that all the data that has been selected for analysis can be seen as a whole and its richness is not lost. The benefit of creating a mind map by hand, rather than using computer software is that multiple connections can quickly, and in draft form, be shown using arrows, lines and other visual indicators. This meant, in practice, that several draft versions were needed to be created that led up to the final and complete version. The overriding reason for utilising this method was that 'mind-maps afford flexibility when thematically analysing qualitative data - particularly useful for the iterative process of qualitative analysis.'¹⁵⁰ In mind-mapping, in contrast to the top down approach of the older and more traditional concept mapping, the main themes are placed in the middle of the page each being a main branch emanating from the middle primary theme (negative narratives) and each having a different colour assigned to it. That colour is kept throughout each theme as it is subdivided down. From these the next level of 'branches' are created as the rich data that has been selected is placed upon the mind-map. From these further sub-branches are created as data is placed where the researcher believes that each piece selected best fits. These sub-divisions creating that visual display of how the data selected breakdown into sub-themes within the primary themes.

As the mind-map, for this thesis, grew a number of arrows, images, pictures (symbols that would be visually helpful for analysing patterns) were used to highlight connections and contradictions both within themes and across themes. Each theme, with its branches and sub branches, was able to be separately observed and examined being in the same colour. It was, therefore, easy to differentiate from each of the other themes with their branches and sub-branches. This powerful tool, Mind Mapping, drew out the 'thick' narrative and displayed the patterns across the data selected in the *Daily Mail*.

¹⁴⁹ Burgess-Allen, J. & Owen-Smith, V. (2010). Using mind mapping techniques for qualitative data analysis. Health Expectations, Vol 13, pp. 406-415., p, 412.

¹⁵⁰ Meier, P, S. (2007). Mind-mapping. University of Surrey, Social Research Update. Issue 52., p, 3.

3.4 The Daily Mail.

The *Daily Mail* was not random choice as it can accurately be described as the most powerful, in terms of its coverage and influence, newspaper in Britain today. The *Daily Mail* is a daily tabloid newspaper and is owned by the *Daily Mail* and General Trust. It is published Monday to Saturday with a sister paper that was launched in 1982, overseen by a different team of people, publishing on Sunday. The *Daily Mail* first came out on the 4th of May in 1896 and is now the biggest selling daily newspaper with The Sun as the second most popular. After the Second World War it developed into a paper that became increasingly popular. It ran, and continues to run, daily prizes, give-away toys, cheap holiday offers and competitions. It was also the first mainstream newspaper to engage a female audience and always provides extended news items on fashion, cooking and women's health issues. It also campaigns on health issues and often looks to champion a group whose needs, they argue, are being overlooked by the Government or local authorities.

The *Daily Mail* was the very first British newspaper to sell over one million copies a day. In 1992, the current editor, Paul Dacre, was appointed to oversee the growth of the paper. It has grown since then in influence and coverage with statistics showing that in the early part of 2015 the daily print run, Monday to Saturday, was 1,688,727 with over 12 million unique visitors reading the *Daily Mail* online.¹⁵¹ The *Daily Mail* can appear to be a newspaper that supports the Conservative Party. However, that would be misreading and a misunderstanding of the nature and culture of this daily tabloid. When the *Daily Mail* uses negative narratives it appears to target anyone and any situation that might suggest scandal or controversy. In the copies analysed for this thesis there were stories that attacked politicians from all the main parties including: Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat. In addition, a regular examination of the *Daily Mail* shows narrative attacks upon 'scroungers, druggies, homosexuals...the rich and the powerful...' ¹⁵² Nick Davies¹⁵³ attacks papers such as the *Daily Mail* describing their tactics as 'aggressive distortion'¹⁵⁴ arguing that they pick the parts of a story that will court controversy or suggest scandal, whilst ignoring the 'thickness' inherent in people's

¹⁵¹ Daily Mail. (January 2015). 'Readership Data.' News Works. <http://www.newsworks.org.uk/Daily-Mail.Online>.

¹⁵² Davies, N. (2009). *Flat Earth News*. London: Chatto & Windus., p, 370.

¹⁵³ Davies is an internationally renowned journalist who has won many awards including British Press Awards Reporter of the Year, Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism and the Paul Foot Award. He writes, with an obvious bias, against aggressive tactics used, allegedly, by newspaper and media outlets in their search for scandals that sometimes misrepresent the reality of the story.

¹⁵⁴ Davies, N. (2009)., p, 357.

lives that might mitigate or explain actions that taken in isolation might lead to an inaccurate judgement on people or a particular situation. Psychologists argue that this can be normal behaviour for human beings once they have settled into seemingly homogeneous groups. Those that are heterogeneous can be seen as a threat or are more easily put into a category of ‘threat’ through the power of a narrative that both generalizes and is hostile in nature. This human behaviour does not necessarily begin with prejudice intended, but rather it rests upon the principle that people generally

mate with their own kind. They eat, play, reside in homogeneous clusters...the business of life can go on with less effort if they stick together with our own kind. Foreigners are a strain! So too are people of a higher or lower class than our own...¹⁵⁵

The media utilising stereotyping is not a modern phenomenon. For example, in 1905 the *Daily Mail* published a front-page article with the following headline: ‘workhouse in Camberwell is a poverty ‘palace’ – a ‘Workhouse de Luxe.’ The owners had indulged the unworthy inmates by giving them good bread and allowing them to go outside during the day.’¹⁵⁶ The newspaper briefly mentioned the factual information near the end of the article, the changes to the law and how those in a workhouse should now be treated. The headline itself used language that was generalizing and hostile. The deliberate choice of words showed no differentiation between the two contrasting words of ‘workhouse’ and ‘palace.’ It placed these words side by side in order to be provocative. A search through the British Newspaper Archives highlighted other examples of this.¹⁵⁷ Nearly one hundred years later the *Daily Mail* wrote about a Christmas Card that demonized those who were benefit dependent and living on a council estate (*Mail* 7/12/14, front page). In December 2014 a UK based greeting cards company, Clinton Cards, produced a card which was entitled ‘Why Santa must live on a council estate.’ Within the card, the *Daily Mail* reported, were a number of reasons given for this statement which included the following: ‘he only works once a year, he drinks alcohol during working hours, he can get hold of the latest designer gear but never pays a penny for it!’ The commentary from the *Daily Mail* was encapsulated in

¹⁵⁵ Stangor, C. (2000). *Stereotypes and Prejudice*. Hove: Psychology Press., p, 26. Stangor’s research over thirty years has examined both the development of stereotypes and the effect upon those targeted.

¹⁵⁶ Hutton, W. (2011)., p, 292.

¹⁵⁷ Two examples demonstrate this further. First, (*Daily Mail* 12/1/1914., p, 5) Child labour and luxury. ‘poverty was not the cause of youngsters having to work...it was sometimes sheer selfishness of the parents, who wanted more luxury and amusements.’ Second, (*Daily Mail* 6/7/1951., p, 2). From the heart. ‘it is the poor character of poor people that is to blame for their own difficulties and discontent.’ <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>. Online.

this sentence ‘the apparent humour was lost on dozens of customers who took offence at the card.’ Clinton Cards quickly withdrew this card from sale.

In the same period that this thesis examined copies of the *Daily Mail*, a new Christian think-tank, Jubilee+, conducted small-scale research into the negative narratives in the press towards those on benefits. They looked at ten different media outlets and examined 390 articles that had been published over January 2014. They discovered that

78 articles featured either a negative attitude towards the poor, negative language about the poor, or portrayed the poor as undeserving of help or to blame for their own situation...the Daily Mail and The Sun accounted for 64% of all the negative articles...A factor that makes this worse is that almost two-thirds of the negative Daily Mail articles were news items (63%), rather than comment pieces, where opinion and subjectivity are to be expected.¹⁵⁸

It is not controversial to suggest that television, film and other media outlets influence people’s thinking and attitudes. Arguably it is through emotionally charged advertising that governments have sought to, often successfully, change public behaviour such as in driving with a seatbelt, not drinking under the influence of alcohol or, more recently, not using a mobile telephone whilst driving.¹⁵⁹ Often the campaigns are aggressive in their approach showing death, serious injury and personal consequences for those who continue to behave in the existing way. Therefore, it is not, necessarily, that aggressive language is wrong, rather that there is a significant question to ask with reference to the motivation behind such narratives and, thereby, the effects of that language upon those targeted.

¹⁵⁸ Charlesworth, M & Williams N. (2014). *The Myth of the Undeserving Poor*. London: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited., p. 36.

¹⁵⁹ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents demonstrate not only that these campaigns are successful in reducing the number of people offending, but also that these campaigns needed to be continuous and continually change with a fresh video or pictorial advert. Between 1963, when the campaign for wearing a seatbelt in a car whilst driving began, and 2014 there have been 54 different advertisements and videos shown on national television that promoted safer driving through either the wearing of seatbelts or not drinking alcohol before driving. These show a causal relationship between the ongoing use of media in portraying a consistent message and changes in public attitudes and behavior. <http://www.rosipa.com/road-safety/advice/road-users/campaign-history>. Online.

3.5 The Thematic Analysis of the Daily Mail.

Copies of the *Daily Mail*, but not the *Daily Mail on Sunday* which is overseen by a different team of people, were randomly selected from the beginning of the 2014 from the months January to March. These were bought randomly and free from any influence of the front-page or other articles within. This was achieved by having randomly selected weeks delivered to my house over the period chosen. Five weeks of copies, amounting to thirty newspapers, were purchased in this manner to be read and then analysed. The process of reading and re-reading rigorously followed the pattern and methodology outlined already to maintain validity throughout.¹⁶⁰

3.5.1 An overview of the Daily Mail.

From the randomly chosen copies the following can be suggested about the *Daily Mail* as a whole:

1. It often has special offers for its readers, cooking tips and regular ‘agony aunt’ columns.
2. It has campaigns ranging from people’s health, to sexual or relationship problems and financial worries.
3. It has regular columnists for areas such as international, national, political and community news.
4. In the second half of the paper there are number of regular sections that have crosswords, free toy offers, theatre and film events, a book section, holiday advertisements, finance, racing/betting news and sports fixtures and results.

The first half of the newspaper contains the majority of the news that, generally, contains two contrasting types of articles that appear within the *Daily Mail*. There are those that appear to simply offer factual information and those that spotlight a particular person or group with language that shows a particular bias against the target of the narrative. The negative spotlight is particularly bright as often the same article appears continually for several days and builds up both in its ferocity and in the amount of

¹⁶⁰ Ultimately in empirical research there is a fundamental question: how many case studies should be examined? The period chosen matched with the controversial Channel Four Programme ‘Benefits Street’ appearing on mainstream television (examined and explained in this chapter). The random selection of thirty *Daily Mail* newspapers from this period allowed this chapter to examine how the *Daily Mail* responded to these negative narratives, directed at people on benefits, on Channel Four. It also afforded enough copies in order to place scrutiny on how the *Daily Mail* commented upon those living in poverty in general. Each newspaper contained, on average, over 100 pages. Therefore, thirty copies of this newspaper for this research question are deemed to be sufficient for validity.

column space given to it. Moreover these types of article appear to be dressed up in ‘pantomime’¹⁶¹ narrative, offering either unconditional support or condemnation. One such example of this type of article, a typology that appears to be a common linguistic tool in the *Daily Mail*, is demonstrated by the *Daily Mail* claiming that different members of the Labour political party’s shadow front bench (currently in Parliament as of 2014) were involved in supporting a group that supported paedophilia (e.g. *Daily Mail* 20/02/14, front page). Over a period of two weeks the *Daily Mail* conducted a campaign that insisted on an apology from these politicians. The articles grew in both ferocity and the amount of space given within the newspaper. In each article the politicians, against whom this was alleged, were painted in the ‘blackest’ picture with regards to their characters.

Within this context there are also articles that first appear to be factual and of general interest which then, on a future date, reappear re-dressed with ‘pantomime’ narrative. One such example was an article about film stars who attend a dinner with HRH the Duke of Cambridge (*Daily Mail* 17/02/2014, p, 3) and was initially presented as a factual article. The language used simply described the people attending and the spectacular clothes they were wearing. The following day the same story reappeared with a different perspective as the language turned to bias and criticized the Royal Family for being too closely involved with film stars (*Daily Mail* 18/02.2014, p, 15). The photograph and the details were the same on both days; however, the second day’s article levelled a number of criticisms that appeared incongruous with the factual report the previous day. There was no hint in the first story that there would be criticism coming the following day. The two alternative approaches to the same event, when placed side by side, are quite incongruous.

Not unlike other national newspapers the *Daily Mail* also turns its attention to a variety of campaigns and attempts to engage with the public ‘temperature’ often on controversial issues. One such campaign was in regard to those farmers and homeowners whose properties and land was damaged when the Somerset levels were flooded at the beginning of 2014. They sought public support, by signing an online

¹⁶¹ A pantomime is widely known, in British society, as a colourful stage production that contains easily recognisable villains and heroes. There is no need for the audience to engage its cognitive processes as the stage production, music and costumes provide obvious pointers to whom the audience should ‘cheer’ and whom they should ‘boo.’ One clear aspect of the *Daily Mail* newspaper is that, in its main news articles, it often portrays the people or groups it writes about in an equally black and white manner. This also means that the newspaper, written in mainly high frequency prose, is easy to read as it neither requires any existing empirical knowledge of any issue, nor does it offer any conundrums or dichotomies for the reader to think through or debate within themselves. The *Daily Mail* columnists have already done the reader’s thinking for them and offer them either a ‘hero’ or a ‘villain.’

petition, to change Government policy on overseas aid to developing countries. In one day, the *Daily Mail* claimed, over 100,000 people had signed their petition seeking a change in policy (*Daily Mail* 10/02/14, front page). The *Daily Mail* used identical photographs of a family in their flooded house, whilst providing an analysis of different developing countries that received assistance and aid from the British government. Local families in Somerset were described as in need and struggling, whilst developing countries were described as corrupt or so ignorant that the aid was wasted. The linguistic metaphors created a picture that almost seem to reverse the situations suggesting that those in Somerset were the poor and in need, as opposed to those in the poorest parts of the world who had plenty because of British assistance and aid. One powerful phrase that demonstrates this device can found at the end of this particular article ('How we pour millions into foreign flood zones.' (*Daily Mail* 12/02/2014, p, 4-5) when referring to £1.6 million given to Mozambique for reconstruction after the extensive flooding there in January 2014. It said this was 'just the kind of relief money, in fact, that the exhausted residents of the Somerset Levels and the flooded Thames Valley can only dream of.' This linguistic tool portrayed one group of people as the 'heroes' who are battling against flooding in Somerset and the 'villains' who are receiving British taxpayer's money that should be kept at home. Nowhere in the paper does any balance appear that gives any information about the 'villains' who are people living in, as the World Bank demonstrates, one of the poorest countries in the world where 'more than 50 percent of the population still lives in poverty...' ¹⁶² This type of balanced argument that would prevent this 'pantomime' bias was not observed once during the analysis of the thirty copies of the *Daily Mail*. This newspaper often uses, as a linguistic device, an aggressive and combative style of prose that presents groups in either of two pantomime roles: hero or villain.

3.5.2 Key phrases, drawing out data and rationalising.

As each newspaper copy was read, and re-read, it became clear that there was valid material in four out of five days for each day of the week. The success rate for articles or headlines that related to the search criteria of negative narratives was eighty percent, or twenty-four, of the thirty daily copies of the *Daily Mail* newspaper that were analysed. Of that number there were fifteen newspapers with only one reference found

¹⁶² Fox, L, Bardasi, L & Van den Broeck, K. (2005). Poverty in Mozambique: Unraveling Changes and Determinants. Africa Region Working Paper Series No. 87. The World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/wps/wp87.pdf>. Online. p, 2.

pertaining to the search criteria, whilst the other nine all had multiple references. In total there were forty-six articles, from twenty-four newspapers out of the thirty that were examined, that matched the search parameters.

Within the *Daily Mail* there are often many different types of story that range from lost pets, to international politics; from regular double page articles on local ‘heroes’, to campaigns to change either government policies or health campaigns. Reporting on poverty is also, as this analysis shows, often found within the newspaper and is located in many different sections. As the material was drawn out it became clear that some of the newspaper articles referred to poverty and those living in poverty in more general terms; whereas the majority of the articles had specific references that matched four out of the five search criteria that were based upon the stereotyping assumptions already examined. The breakdown was as follows:

- There were eleven articles referring generally to those living in poverty with negative stereotypes.
- There were eight articles referring to poor people living on benefits suggesting that were *are on the fiddle* and six suggesting that they *have an easy life on benefits*.
- There were six articles that referred to this group as *lazy*, with a further nine that spanned the two search criteria of *lazy* and *just don't want to work*.
- There were also six articles that strongly argued that people on benefits *don't manage their money properly*.
- However, over the span of time examined, there were no articles that referred to this group as being *addicted to drink and drugs*.

In summary, out of the thirty newspapers examined there were thirty-five articles that were within the specific search parameters. These came from twenty-four out of the original thirty newspapers that were examined.

The coding framework, which used Mind-Mapping,¹⁶³ created several branches and levels that broken down the data. The analysis looked for patterns, both in use of language and linguistic tools, which would suggest some conclusions in regard to the way the *Daily Mail* writes about those living in poverty. There is not enough space in this thesis to analyse each and every article, rather the analysis took articles that

¹⁶³ Mind Mapping is a highly effective way of putting ideas down in both pictorial form and as key-phrases to demonstrate both correlation and the differences between multiple elements within any topic studied. In 1963 a British psychologist, Tony Buzan, codified this approach and gave it a modern framework. <http://thinkbuzan.com/products/imindmap/> Online.

encapsulate the data as a whole and includes any material that is either divergent or simply stands apart from the rest.

3.5.3 Overview of those living in Poverty.

Eleven separate articles gave an overview of the *Daily Mail*'s commentary on poverty and benefits in general. One of these (*Daily Mail* 10/03/14, p, 17-18) was a two-page article on a young lady, on benefits, called Gemma Worrall. The headline begins with the single word: 'Stupid?' It referred to a message she had sent via social media where she had commented on an international news item to friends. Her message had referred to 'Barraco Barner' (meaning Barrack Obama the American president). She realised her mistake but before she could delete the message many people had passed it on. The national newspapers picked it and ran the story. The *Daily Mail* wrote this article as a community interest story with the first part of the article about meeting Gemma. The second part refers to the aggressive and threatening message Gemma has received from others about her initial message. Not only does the *Daily Mail* not address, in any format, the issues of abusive messages via social media, it further ends the article in a derogatory manner and strongly suggests that Gemma is in fact 'Stupid.'

3.5.4 Analysis of articles: *The poor are 'on the fiddle'*

There are numerous stories in the *Daily Mail* concerning people on benefits that appear, in the overwhelming majority, in the news rather than community interest section. One such story, taking up half of a page, (*Daily Mail* 14/05/14, p, 11) has a headline containing the phrase 'raked in' referring to the ten families, and no more, in the UK who had received on average £85,000 in benefits. The *Daily Mail* had tried to obtain details of their names and addresses but had been denied this by the Department for Work and Pensions in order 'to protect their identity.' Whilst the *Daily Mail* briefly mentions that there are only ten families in Britain receiving up to this amount in benefits, the article is hostile and written passionately about people, in general, who receive large amounts of benefits. No further data is given other than the figures of 'ten families' and '£85,000.' This is an example of the *Daily Mail* using specific data about a few in order to generalize about the many; it deliberately casts these families in the role of 'villains.'

A two-page article on Romanian families living in Britain (*Daily Mail* 15/02/14, p 14-15) writes about them 'cashing in' on benefits and describes their benefits as if they had

‘found a big bag of money on the street.’ Another article (*Daily Mail* 22/02/14, p, 21) used language that placed the general public into two separate camps: those who are hardworking and those on benefits. This linguistic device again deliberately creates the black and white ‘pantomime’ imagery that encourages the reader to compare and contrast. The *Daily Mail* uses strong language in its comparisons saying that the system is ‘morally wrong’ and that we have an ‘insidious culture of welfare dependence.’ However, research demonstrates that ‘welfare recipients are perhaps the most stigmatized subset of the poor...yet the majority are dependent children and their unmarried mothers.’¹⁶⁴ Groups of people already struggling in their daily lives are castigated in these narratives for being poor and on benefits. Moreover, they are neither given the ability to respond to the manner in which they are portrayed, nor do they have the financial means to seek any reparation from a large and powerful institution such as the *Daily Mail*. Already the data analysed suggests an aspect of poverty called ‘cumulative disadvantage.’ This refers to the lack of assets that a family, living in poverty, will have to fall back on if there are financial emergencies. It means that ‘poor households are naturally left with reduced earning ability...and a limited capacity to earn money...less able to rely on self-provisioning activities...and less able to draw sustenance from interpersonal networks of reciprocal exchange.’¹⁶⁵ In essence it means that a section of the population is always at a financial and, therefore, social disadvantage.

3.5.5 The poor have an ‘Easy Life.’

Benefits Street¹⁶⁶ attempted to demonstrate how the benefit dependent residents of one street lived. Ofcom, who mediate television, received hundreds of complaints with regard to the continuously negative way in which the residents were portrayed. It raised considerable debate and controversy in the press and on social media regarding whether it gave those on benefits a voice or simply exploited them. There are five separate articles, in a series, in which the *Daily Mail* discussed this controversial programme over the period that the qualitative content analysis took place. One such article used imagery to suggest the easy life that these residents live whilst on benefits (*Daily Mail* 28/01/14, p 22). The article placed photographs of each of the residents on this

¹⁶⁴ Secombe, K, Delors, J & Walters, K. (1998)., p, 851.

¹⁶⁵ Gonzalez, M. (2006). Vanishing Assets: Cumulative Disadvantage among the urban poor. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. July 2006. Vol. 606, no. 68-94., p, 69.

¹⁶⁶ See: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/benefits-street>. Online. A channel four documentary first aired on the 6th of January 2014.

programme next to photographs of well-known television celebrities and film stars with whom they shared certain visual similarities. This full-page article, of photographs, ran with the headline ‘Double the benefits.’ Another article, as part of this series, (*Daily Mail* 22/02/14, p 18) gave a full-page narrative about one of the residents. It mentioned the threats against her life and bricks thrown at her house from members of the public who were responding to her ‘lavish lifestyle’ as portrayed by Channel Four. Knowing all of this, the *Daily Mail* commentated in several places, within the article, upon her lifestyle of ‘cashing in’ and her ‘playing the insidious benefit system.’ Despite all the controversy around this television programme the *Daily Mail* chose to play upon the stereotypes and labels already employed in the public domain to foster an ongoing sensationalist narrative about the residents. Stereotypes can be an intrinsic part of natural human thinking for categorising our surroundings and for ordering our lives. However, those shown so far arguably have a negative impact upon those targeted by the pejorative narratives.

3.5.6 *They don’t manage their money.*

There are a number of articles in which the *Daily Mail* was critical of church leaders who were speaking about the increasing use of Food-bank provision in the UK. Two articles (*Daily Mail* 8/02/14, p 16 & 20/02/14, p, 18.), as part of a series, attacked the Catholic Church for being critical of government reforms to the welfare state system. The first article discussed the ‘moral case for reforming the bloated benefits system’ and then adds that families have more than enough money to live on when there is ‘200 billion spent on benefits every year.’ The second article reminded the reader that ‘200 billion is spent every year’ and then claims that very few people go to food-banks because of welfare reforms especially considering the ‘£6.25 increase in Jobseeker’s Allowance.’ A further article (*Daily Mail* 12/03/14, p, 12) heavily criticized those on benefits for needing to go to any food-bank to receive help. The commentary from the *Daily Mail* included the following phrases: ‘what are families with gadgets such as i-pads, televisions and Android phones doing going to food-banks?’ Each time these articles and others appear, the narrative has very specific data attached to those criticized. However, the data on the rising cost of living, the actual data on food-bank use or other salient information is either missing or vague. The negative stance taken by the *Daily Mail* has accurate and explicit data, the other side of the argument that could have brought balance into the article, has little or none. This, again, is another example

of a newspaper doing the reader's thinking for them. This pantomime approach to narrative not only portrays one side in a negative stereotype without proffering any alternative perspectives, but also predetermines the right answer for the reader.

3.5.7 *They are: Lazy; Lazy and Workshy.*

Within the five assertions studied there were a number of articles that were co-located. The negative narratives of *lazy* and *workshy* are similar in concept and highlight, again, the stereotype and prejudice behind societal attitudes today.

'New Welfare Crackdown on Workshy' was the front-page headline article (*Daily Mail* 27/01/14). It published numerous articles, in a series, about a 'cap' on the amount that any benefit-dependent household can receive. This article discussed welfare as a 'lifestyle choice' using such language it, again, placed the general public into two distinct 'pantomime' camps: 'workless households or tax-payers...(or)...younger jobseekers or hardworking families.' It also highlighted the large savings that would be made by enforcing the cap on benefits pay-outs again each time referring to these as 'savings' to working households or the taxpayer. In an article about sick pay (*Daily Mail* 10/02/14, p, 25), it wrote about a 'crackdown' on those who are off work. Whilst this does not refer to people dependent upon benefits it included more examples of the way this newspaper uses pejorative language. It referred to those who are sick and off work as the ones who are 'costing the economy £100 million pounds a year.' Whereas businesses, who are the 'heroes', will benefit once the government has abolished the long-term sick pay benefits, again, creating a large saving to the public sector welfare budget. The 'villains' in the story are those who are sick and are a burden to the welfare budget.

In an article that began as a celebration of falling unemployment the *Daily Mail* commented that the Government's welfare reforms were making 'it less lucrative to live off the State rather than to find a job' (*Daily Mail* 30/3/14, p, 6.). In a similar article, pitched as factual, (*Daily Mail* 27/01/14, p, 27) it states that there have been over 1700 complaints about Channel 4's programme 'Benefits Street.' Whilst the article continued in a factual manner about some of the residents it ends with an image heavily imbued with a derogatory and devaluing message. The image invited television viewers to press their 'red button' on their television remote control in order to give money to the residents in 'Benefit Streets' portraying them as a group of beggars. In addition, the use of the 'red button' is also clearly linked to reality television programmes where viewers

are asked to vote on, or off, contestants from a show. In doing so, the *Daily Mail* asked its readers, via this negative imagery, to vote ‘on’ or ‘off’ residents of Benefits Street. This clearly encourages its readers not to see the residents as equals, but rather as lesser people who could, or perhaps should, be ‘deselected’ from society at the whim of a television remote control button.

A further two-page article (*Daily Mail* 17/02/, pp., 22 & 24) described the residents of Benefit Street as ‘those very shameless residents’ listing different residents’ character faults. It focused in upon one resident called ‘White Dee’ and made this commentary about her in the context of her appearance on a day time television chat-show: ‘what kind of society have we become, many might wonder, when a woman such as White Dee is feted as a celebrity and role model?’ Another two-page article (*Daily Mail* 22/02/14, p, 24-25), also on the television series ‘Benefits Street’, read ‘So White Dee (one of the benefit-dependent residents), how does it feel to be the poster girl for everything that’s wrong with Britain?’ The article also pointed out that the residents believed that the production team was not honest with them about the manner in which they planned to portray the residents in the final edit. However, the *Daily Mail*, as part of its commentary, continually referred to one of the residents called ‘White Dee’ as ‘infamous and shameless.’ These labels are also attributed to her because of various items in her house including ‘Virgin Media television...Dairy Milk chocolate in the fridge...bottles of vodka and gin...’ She was also criticized for having ‘beautifully manicured nails’ which meant, the *Daily Mail* stated, that she is a ‘woman of leisure.’ These articles, all pejorative and hostile in their language, can be summed up by the following quote from American research into societal attitudes towards those living in poverty. It would appear that in modern media narratives the word welfare is now

commonly used pejoratively – as in “welfare mother” or “welfare queen”...the public desire to deter and punish welfare cheating has overwhelmed the will to provide economic security to vulnerable members or society. While welfare use has always borne the stigma of poverty, it now also bears the stigma of criminality.¹⁶⁷

The worst aspect of these negative, devaluing and derogatory narratives, seen through the lens of the *Daily Mail*, is that rarely do the voices of poor people reach mainstream literature or the news without it being a derisory narrative. In each and every case described and analysed it would appear that the groups or individuals are castigated,

¹⁶⁷ Gustafson, K. (2009). The Criminalisation of Poverty. The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology. Vol. pp, No. 3. Pp. 643-716., p, 644.

humiliated, demonized and criminalized. In an extraordinary first-hand account of the realities of living in poverty, 'Hand to Mouth', Linda Tirado vents her personal anger about being poor and at the way those with money regard those without, saying this:

I make a lot of poor decisions. None of them matter, in the long term. I will never not be poor, so what does it matter if I don't pay a thing and a half this week instead of just one thing? It's not like the sacrifice will result in improved circumstances...It is not worth it to me to live a bleak life devoid of small pleasures so that one day I can make a single large purchase. I will never have large pleasures to hold on to...when you never have enough money it ceases to have meaning...poverty is bleak and cuts off your long-term brain...¹⁶⁸

Whilst Linda Tirado continues to write about poverty she quickly discovered that, once she was published, a number of national and international newspapers attempted to undermine her work looking for evidence that either she had 'ghost' written the book or that she had in some way misrepresented how hard her life had been to date. Her determined attempts to have a voice and be heard as a person living in poverty were quickly castigated. She was treated with a pejorative narrative whilst living in poverty; the media then derided her when she attempted to have a voice in the public domain. Fricker calls this type of discrimination 'epistemic injustice.' It is in analysing where justice goes wrong and becomes 'negative identity prejudice'¹⁶⁹ that society can begin to discover what freedom, equality and justice could look like. Fricker states that society, through negative narratives, can create a situation where groups of people will be ignored or disbelieved before they have even spoken. Their credibility, their character and motives are effectively discredited in advance of speaking. This combined with the cumulative disadvantage of living in poverty means that not only are some exposed to greater risk, but also their voice is less likely to be acknowledged should they be given an opportunity to speak out.

¹⁶⁸ Tirado, L. (2014)., p, xviii. Tirado wrote her best selling book about being in the poverty trap herself in America. She received accolade from some quarters, but the press attempted to vilify her.

¹⁶⁹ Fricker, M. (2007). Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing. Oxford Scholarship Online. September 2007. DOI. 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001., p, 15.

3.6 Epistemic injustice as a result of negative narratives.

Fricker encapsulates the issue at hand with her phrase ‘epistemic injustice.’ Her research examined the manner in which both women and ethnic groups (from black people, to the homosexual community) are, at times, mistreated and discriminated against. Within her research she examined two different elements within ‘epistemic injustice’ one of which was ‘testimonial injustice.’ This accurately describes the negative narratives examined in this thesis. Fricker defined this as the effect that ‘occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker’s word.’¹⁷⁰ This clearly has relevance to the articles examined in the *Daily Mail*. Whether it was individuals derided from *Benefit Streets* or the article on Gemma Worrall (who was called stupid because of the social media comment she had incorrectly posted about the American President, Barrak Obama) none of them were portrayed in a positive light and much of the commentary suggested that none of them were credible or even worth listening to. Their characters were stained and their voices muted before they even spoke. Chapter three has clearly demonstrated several examples of ‘testimonial injustice’ within the wider issue of ‘epistemic injustice.’

Fricker’s work also discusses an inherent dysfunctionality within humanity and its apparent need to stereotype others into groups. Humanity, she argues, cannot appear to be able or willing to include everyone within the same group; this inherent need to partition means that some have, in effect, a ‘credibility excess’...whilst others...‘a credibility deficit.’¹⁷¹ This requires the creation of an environment where one group can, and chooses to, distance itself from the other. The media examples already studied in this thesis have demonstrated ‘such distancing in the form of exclusion, separation, devaluing and discounting.’¹⁷² Each of the articles examined contained narratives that used stereotypes in order to shape groups and each person’s place within or without each group. Narrative was used to either remind people of, or create, social partitioning. These narratives were shown to be part of a collective spotlight that consistently and continually highlighted people living in poverty. This ‘spotlight’ could be seen as a systematic injustice that, as Fricker states, ‘tracks the subject through different dimensions of social activity-economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on.’¹⁷³ In this ‘tracking’ no element of life is left unobserved

¹⁷⁰ Fricker, M. (2009). *Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p, 1.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* (2009)., p, 17.

¹⁷² Lott, B. (2002)., p, 108.

¹⁷³ Fricker, M. (2009)., p, 27.

or commented upon as the group who are partitioned need to be discredited in every aspect of their nature, character and being. The power of these negative narratives marginalize people and create an environment in which their voice will not be believed even before they have spoken. They are, in effect, partitioned like sheep, without their consent, into a pen that has been labelled ‘discredited’ and ‘unworthy.’

Narrowing down her description of this social issue, Fricker offers the following further analysis: ‘*negative identity-prejudice*... a widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or more attributes.’¹⁷⁴ Fricker discusses, at length, the example of this form of epistemic and testimonial injustice portrayed within the renowned novel ‘*To Kill a Mockingbird*.’¹⁷⁵

Another such example can be found in the ancient Greek tragedy by Sophocles called ‘*Philoctetes*.’¹⁷⁶ The recipient of the ‘*negative identity-prejudice*’ in this story is the famed archer Philoctetes whose bow will never miss its target. However, on route to the Trojan War, Philoctetes developed leg ulcers and found himself abandoned to a desert island by his colleagues because they could no longer stomach the smell emanating from his legs. Years later they return to try and trick Philoctetes into handing over his famous bow which, the gods have told them, is the answer to ending a ten-year war of attrition against the Trojans. In order to persuade a young man to trick Philoctetes out of his bow the reputation of Philoctetes is further disparaged and the justifications for leaving him on the island increased. However, there are clear differences between these two examples in literature and the media articles examined in the *Daily Mail*. In the former the reader is made keenly aware of the injustice of the situation and that the ‘*negative identity-prejudice*’ forced upon the recipients of the epistemic injustice is clearly wrong. In the media articles in the *Daily Mail* there is no apparent injustice in the negative narratives, other than the epistemic injustice, lying beneath the surface that places the blame for the situation narrated upon the recipient of the negative narrative. The *Daily Mail* portrays, in part, fiction as truth. This creates an ongoing cumulative effect of upon the disadvantaged as the voice of those living in poverty continues to be intentionally discredited.

Fricker’s important research speaks directly into the core issue of this thesis: negative

¹⁷⁴ Fricker, M. (2009)., p. 35.

¹⁷⁵ Harper, L. (2010). *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. London: Penguin. In this internationally renowned novel a black man, who clearly did not commit the crime he is accused of, is found guilty because his testimony cannot be believed because he is black. His very nature and character has been discredited before he was even born, let alone accused of rape. His testimony in court is irrelevant because it will never be believed.

¹⁷⁶ See: Sophocles. (2010). *Electra and other plays*. Reading: Cox & Wyman Ltd.

narratives devalue those that they are directed at. Her use of the word ‘injustice’ is in part legal, though it is moral with its power lying in the negative effect that she believes it has upon those being crushed by it. She explains this saying,

When someone suffers a testimonial injustice they are degraded *qua* knower, and they are symbolically degraded *qua* human. In all cases of testimonial injustice, what the person suffers from is not simply the epistemic wrong in itself, but also the meaning of being treated like that. Such a dehumanizing meaning, especially if it is expressed before others, may make for a profound humiliation, even in circumstances where the injustice is in other respects fairly minor.¹⁷⁷

The analysis of the negative narratives, within the *Daily Mail*, demonstrated numerous occurrences of this. One of these described the residents of Benefit Street as ‘those very shameless residents’ listing different residents’ character faults. The narrative then spotlighted the resident called ‘White Dee’ stating this: ‘what kind of society have we become, many might wonder, when a woman such as White Dee is feted as a celebrity and role model?’ The power of this narrative is that it not only partitions, but it also crushes those whom it linguistically targets.

Ellul¹⁷⁸ argued that negative narratives, being based upon a false premise about someone or something, are by their very nature propaganda. Propaganda is difficult to define, to discover, and to measure. It not as straight forward as a lie or made up story as there always need to be some elements that are true, even as small as a kernel of truth, within the narrative for it to be propaganda. Ellul began his seminal work with a useful working definition stating that ‘propaganda is the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulations.’¹⁷⁹ However, the first aspect to challenge here is the notion that all propaganda is necessarily pejorative. Propaganda can be used to maintain peace and prevent war, to re-educate populations to eat healthier or drive more carefully. Secondly, propaganda has a limited power and works within the existing societal

¹⁷⁷ Fricker, M. (2009)., p, 44.

¹⁷⁸ Ellul, a renowned French sociologist, philosopher, theologian and legal scholar, wrote his seminal work ‘Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes’ in the light of atrocities committed during the Second World War. He accuses the Church of having perverted the Gospel and having lost the scandalous nature of the Cross which asks questions, if honoured, that should reveal and then unravel social injustice. See: Ellul, J. (1986). The Subversion of Christianity. UK: Ethics & Public Policy Center Inc., p, 154.

¹⁷⁹ Ellul, J. (1973). Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes. New York: Vintage Books., p, 61.

attitudes 'which it can modify only very slowly.'¹⁸⁰ Lastly, and with specific regard to this thesis, there is no evidence that the media is deliberately attempting to influence actions or opinions. However, there is a clear and appropriate charge that the media intentionally chooses to utilize the strongest existing societal stereotypes and, perhaps, capitalize upon them too.

Propaganda exists, in part, to use stereotypes in order to create and maintain the 'in-group' versus the 'out-group.' This highlighting of existing stereotypes is a core part of the unhelpful and damaging nature of the negative narratives examined so far. Its power, it would seem from the analysis in this thesis so far, lies in its ability to be used in order to intentionally partition people into groups. This, says Ellul, is because stereotyping is a powerful force. He answers the significant question asked at the beginning of this chapter: what are the effects of this? Ellul says that '...those who read the press of their group...are constantly reinforced in their allegiance...thus we see before our eyes how a world of closed minds establishes itself.'¹⁸¹ There is a crushing and cumulative effect on those who are the recipients of negative societal attitudes. The significance of inequality is that for those living in poverty they are not only are exposed to risk, but also are under-resourced should any new opportunities be offered; they are not only the recipients of negative narratives within society and through the media, but also are 'discredited' by these narratives that then prevent them from having a voice that might be heard and acted appropriately upon. This is the cumulative and crushing effect of the ongoing reinforcing of negative stereotypes and the impact of testimonial injustice upon those living in poverty.

Ellul, who described himself as a radical Christian, called for a more subversive Church that would bravely speak 'truth' to 'power' stating that 'The biblical teaching is clear. It always contests political power. It incites to "counterpower," to "positive" criticism, to an irreducible dialogue (like that between king and prophet in Israel).'¹⁸² Therefore, in this theological reflection with the section of 'Judge', it is time to ask what does Scripture distinctively have to say about narrative and its power?

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* (1973)., p, 295.

¹⁸¹ Ellul, J. (1973)., pp, 213-214.

¹⁸² Ellul, J. (1986)., p, 116.

3.7 Concluding thoughts.

The language used in the Daily Mail creates a sense that the people living in poverty are the problem, in terms of their character and nature, rather than poverty being a social issue to be resolved. This is a powerful linguistic device which can mean that when someone poor doesn't want to clean toilets or sweep the street they can then be labelled 'lazy', 'work-shy' or 'ungrateful.' Societal attitudes may mean that those who have little can be expected to gratefully accept anything.¹⁸³

One classic example of this comes from a growing 'food-bank' culture. The food-bank centres that I oversaw as a priest often received out of date food. We always advertised that food needed to be in date or we could not give it out to families in need. We then had complaints, from the public, that we were throwing hundreds of tins away every week. When we started a conversation about this the prevailing narrative from the public was, in summary, that those in need should accept whatever was given to them, whatever its quality. This could be called 'drip-feeding' the poor. Some of those giving to that food-bank had fragmented their own community and created, in their minds, one group who were worthy of quality and those who utilise food-banks who were not.

The extraordinary results of some research into the 'in-groups' and out-groups' is that people tend to regard members of their 'own group as far more varied in personality than members of the out-group.'¹⁸⁴ The out-group are more easily labelled and thought of collectively and without pause for consideration that they too might all be as diverse and varied as the in-group. This 'mental gymnastics' appears to give humans the predication to apply anecdotal or specific evidence to groups in general. It creates an out-group that can easily become the scapegoat for the rest of society. Upon these people society then can place their difficulties, disappointments, fears and sins.¹⁸⁵ In creating a scapegoat others are able to relieve themselves of any responsibility to either change societal structures or to reflect upon the part they themselves may be playing in maintaining or perpetrating forms of injustice. A scapegoat allows the status quo to remain unchallenged.

¹⁸³ 'Unemployment and low wages are linked with poverty. The unemployed are more likely to find work in low paid jobs...and low paid workers are more likely to experience unemployment than are higher-paid workers. This relationship has been referred to as the 'low-pay-no-pay' cycle characterizing the precarious nature of many low-paid jobs and highlighting the fact that a job may only represent another turn in the cycle of poverty.' Hills, J, Grand, J & Piachaud, D. (2002). Understanding Social Exclusion. Oxford: Oxford University Press., pp. 97-98.

¹⁸⁴ Ed. Plous, S. (2003). Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination. New York: McGrawHill., p, 10.

¹⁸⁵ Rees, E. (2000). Scapegoat Theology. Published in The Furrow. Vol. 51, No. 9., pp. 503-508. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27664139>. Online., p, 504, wrote the following commentary on Girard: he 'observed that most social groups have an inherent need to scapegoat another person or group in order to maintain their own internal stability.'

Long ago Hazlitt¹⁸⁶ wrote as an advocate for the poor who were often hung for stealing bread. In his time the poor were ‘punished not only for crime derived from poverty, and especially for criminalized collective action directed at revisiting poverty, but, after the establishment of the New Poor Law of 1834, for the very fact of being poor itself.’¹⁸⁷ This thesis has demonstrated that stereotyping is harmful and can help discrimination to flourish. It can encourage people to either form negative narratives towards out-groups or to re-enforce such views already believed to be true. Contemporary discrimination can be subtle and hard to challenge; it may also fall short of breaking the law. However, it can ‘nonetheless have a significant impact on the lives of those presumably legally protected from such behaviour.’¹⁸⁸ The *Daily Mail*, in being party to these narratives, provides a daily justification for its reader to distance themselves from those living in poverty. Whether it is subtle, indirect or explicitly obvious, these narratives which have been explored and analysed, punish ‘members of low-status groups by erecting barriers...these groups are either invisible...or are hypervisible as symbols of ridicule...or disdain (e.g., welfare recipients).’¹⁸⁹ The negative narratives analysed seek out, create and vilify people as scapegoat. They target those ‘who live in poor neighbourhoods and who are identified as the shirkers, the underclass or the broken...and they themselves begin to recognise themselves through the mainstream discourse that is defining them.’¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ William Hazlitt (1778 –1830) was considered the greatest art critic of his age and also wrote on behalf of the poor.

¹⁸⁷ Byrne, D. (2009)., p, 20.

¹⁸⁸ Nier, J & Gaertner (2012). The challenge of detecting contemporary forms of discrimination. *Journal of Social Issues*. Vol. 68, No. 2., p, 211.

¹⁸⁹ Lott, B. (2002)., p, 104.

¹⁹⁰ McKenzie, L. (2015)., p, 203.

Chapter 4: 'Judge' - Theological Reflection

Woe to those whom the Lord finds dry-eyed because they could not bring themselves to solidarity with the poor and sufferings of the world...we cannot keep quiet; we must humbly allow the cry of Jesus on the cross to echo through history...¹⁹¹

4.1 'Truth speaks to power' in Biblical narrative.

This chapter theologically examines, as the second half of 'Judge' within the pastoral cycle, what the Church should do in response to the negative narratives already explored. Whilst the world appears prone to exclude others, the cross invites humanity to give of itself in self-sacrifice and seek to include the other. This must begin and end with a theology of hope based upon God's Kingdom, revealed through the person of Jesus Christ, which is both present and yet to be fulfilled.

The Church, through its normative foundation of scripture, professes to know who is the 'truth' and that it has some idea about how to live out that 'truth' for all other human beings who live, predominantly, in communities. Brueggemann consistently professes, throughout his many books, that scripture has an inherent truth¹⁹² within its narratives that can render other narratives false and untrue. He asserts that 'truth', through and as a part of narrative, can and should speak honestly into present day issues. This 'truth' should be able to create space for freedom and lives that can be transformed.

The study of truth asks both what can be known and how can it be known. The search for truth is also an examination what is both false and true in life. When the Roman Governor Pilate asked Jesus 'what is truth?' this was no fanciful question for a highly educated Roman. Pilate would have studied mathematics, linguistics, philosophy, geography, music et al. He, like his peers, would have continually to wrestle with fundamental questions such as this. For the Christian all truth comes from God as revelation. Whilst the question 'what is truth' should not be dismissed there is an all important principle that supersedes this. Jesus never answers Pilate and for good reason. The reality for the Christian, and therefore the Church also, is that the question should

¹⁹¹ Gutiérrez, G. (1987). On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent. Maryknoll: Orbis Books., p. 103.

¹⁹² In terms of truth, or the discipline of epistemology, there are a number of contrasting perspectives and theories. In Biblical and Christian terms the most powerful narrative on truth comes in John's Gospel 14:6 where John wrote that Jesus stated the following: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* NIV Bible (2009). For Christians this statement from Jesus encapsulates the location of true freedom; it is found in and through Him as the Incarnate God. However, truth, its location and conceptual nature, is continually challenged throughout history as it was by Pilate when interviewing Jesus prior to his crucifixion, who challenged Jesus with this question: *"What is Truth?"* John 18:38.

not be 'what is the truth?', but rather this instead: 'who is the truth?' Truth is found not simply in God and from God - it is that God is truth. Jesus, before Pilate, is actually offering himself as the truth, rather than any objective answer to the 'what...' Jesus came into the world, as the Incarnate God, to offer Himself as 'the way and the truth and the life' (John 14: 6). Truth is also, being revealed by God, beyond our understanding and ability to know it entirely.¹⁹³

Brueggemann, relying upon Scripture for a divine revelation of truth, highlights many places within the Old Testament where truth can be drawn out and speak into modern day issues. Two such examples cited by Brueggemann are these: 'hearing the cry of the oppressed as did the God of the burning bush... [and] ...letting old truth touch contemporary public policy in reformatory ways, as did Josiah.'¹⁹⁴ However, the issue of 'truth' and the tension that the Church has to inhabit is a constant balancing act.

Therefore, some explanation is required of this tension of 'truth' within the Church and as the normative base upon which this thesis stands. Milbank, commenting upon the highly controversial nature of 'truth' proclaimed by the Church, says that it has a 'gigantic claim to be able to read, criticize and say what is going on in other human societies...and claim to exhibit the exemplary form of human community.'¹⁹⁵

However, with regard to this tension, the teachings of Jesus Christ also consistently teach Christian disciples to live out their faith with a public and personal humility seeking to serve others with and through this 'truth.' This dilemma or dichotomy may perhaps be resolved, in part, by Brueggemann whose theological arguments attempt to demonstrate that this 'truth' can and should 'speak into power' and, therefore, be that transforming force that brings about freedom. This is 'truth' that should be offered both in humility and with courage in ongoing dialogue with all others. Dialogue that involves a conversation that must include both speaking and listening.

4.2 'Truth speaks to power' in the Old Testament.

As this thesis has demonstrated there are a number of negative narratives within British society that are directed at groups and have the effect of partitioning, truncating and castigating them as scapegoats. Brueggemann argues, in this vein, saying that 'there is a

¹⁹³ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55: 8-9.

¹⁹⁴ Brueggemann, W. (2013)., p, 160.

¹⁹⁵ Milbank, J. (2006). Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing., p, 390.

contest of narratives going on in our society that is urgent, passionate, and sometimes mean-spirited.’¹⁹⁶ This contest can also be seen in the Old Testament where an imperial power that seeks to hold onto its slaves indefinitely meets ‘truth’ that seeks to both bring freedom and to unravel that strangle-hold of power. In the Exodus the great story of ‘Moses versus Pharaoh’ began many years before Moses was born with a large group of Israelites that had moved into Egypt. The Egyptians began to fear them and then, later on, enslaved the Israelites in order to control them. There is a clear element of control that lies behind the creation of ‘out-groups’ that are both partitioned off and discredited within that phenomenon of epistemic and, specifically here, ‘testimonial injustice.’ In this biblical story Pharaoh’s power, perhaps like a powerful national newspaper, appears unchallengeable. There is no opportunity to challenge the prevailing power and negative narratives coming from those with the power. There is no voice or opportunity to be heard for those who are oppressed and castigated; they are, after all, just slaves who are crying out without anyone, other than God, taking the time to listen and respond. In the light of this story Brueggemann asks the following for humanity in the here and now:

who plays the pharaoh in our current performance of the drama, the one who acts in anti-neighborly, exploitative ways and operates a political-economic system that is organized for greedy acquisitiveness?¹⁹⁷

There are also a number of powerful negative narratives, explored in the *Daily Mail*, that clearly link people’s suffering with an assumption of their ‘sin.’ These include the following assertions: ‘**the poor are lazy, they cannot manage their finances, they are addicts.**’ These examples, explored in chapter three, show how narrative can declare that people are to blame for their own problems and that this is the cause of the issue with no need to look elsewhere for an alternative cause.

There are a number of examples of this in the Old Testament, such as in the book of Job. In this story Job loses all his wealth, slaves, children, and then finally his health. However, he continues to praise God despite all this. His three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar) believe that Job’s sufferings are as a result of his sin. They challenge Job to confess so that he can then be forgiven by God and restored. His sufferings are linked, by his friends, inextricably to things that Job must have done wrong. In this state of ‘testimonial injustice’ they have a set narrative that piles ‘cumulative disadvantage’

¹⁹⁶ Brueggemann, W. (2010)., p, 37.

¹⁹⁷ Brueggemann, W. (2013)., p, 37.

upon their friend Job, who not only has to contend with his sufferings, but also with this devaluing and derogatory narrative: your suffering is your own fault.

Gutiérrez, a liberation theologian,¹⁹⁸ writes about suffering heaped upon the poorest that he had witnessed in his home country. From the reality of persecution and the ‘humiliation of races regarded as inferior...’¹⁹⁹ in South America, Gutiérrez sought to wake up the Church from its seemingly complacent position on those who are not only suffering the effects of poverty, but also are being either ignored or blamed for their own situation. In a complex world where suffering continues for so many Gutiérrez highlights a deep and profound theological truth that ‘God has a preferential love for the poor...because they are living in an inhuman situation...’²⁰⁰

Job's story continues as he consistently asserts his innocence which acts, argues Gutiérrez, as an audible protestation for all oppressed people everywhere. This cry for help meets God's love that transcends flawed human justice - justice that has to be placed within the divine framework of God's economy of love. Job, in essence, can be seen as a book that attempts to explain ‘the nature of and the operations of divine providence’²⁰¹ whose economy consists of gratuitous love. At the end of Job's challenging story, the reader discovers that God is angry with the three friends who have not spoken truthfully. God declares that Job is, and always has been, an innocent. Within the book of Job, the voice of the innocent who suffers continues throughout the text, but is unheeded and ignored by his friends who believe that they know better. It is the stark choice of hearing and heeding versus ignoring and castigating that Job offers. Job can also be seen as a foretelling of the message that Jesus will proclaim: God's economy of love.

A further example can be found in the experiences and reign of the King of Judah, Josiah, who ruled from the young age of eight (641-608 BC).²⁰² Josiah is credited with not only refurbishing the Temple of the Lord, but also with reinstating God's law, The Torah, across his country after a disregarded scroll had been found in the Temple. Old Testament historians, such as Brueggemann, take this scroll to be the book of

¹⁹⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Dominican priest and theologian, has spent many years working poor and oppressed people. The term, Liberation Theology, first became well known when he used it in his work (1971) *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas*. Lima: CEP. Gutierrez argues that charity is not only an inappropriate substitute for justice, but also that sin, as argued by opponents, is not the source of poverty. The sin, he argues, lies in the unjust structures that both place people within and hold them in poverty.

¹⁹⁹ Gutiérrez, G. (1987), p 102.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* (1987), p 94.

²⁰¹ Stump, E. *Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job*. In Howard-Snyder, D. ed. (1996). *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Indiana: Indiana University Press., pp. 49-68., p. 52.

²⁰² Josiah's story is located in the book of Kings 2: 22-23.

Deuteronomy. This contains warnings of curses and promises of blessings for God's people if they worship only the Lord God and look after all the people in their land with abundant generosity. In this narrative, 'truth' is discovered in the scroll and the 'power' that is invested in King Josiah, takes its 'truth' on board and responded humbly and immediately to it.

In a final example, found in 2 Samuel 12, the prophet Nathan approaches King David and shares a narrative about a rich man who has treated a poor man badly. There is clear injustice in the story, as the poor man has no opportunity to complain against such a rich and powerful opponent. David is indignant and calls for the rich man to be punished. However, Nathan has used this narrative in order to trap David because he has employed this simple story to reprimanded David himself who, as the richest and most powerful man in the land, stole another man's wife and orchestrated her husband's death. David, in response says to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."²⁰³ David immediately repents, changes his behaviour and allows the 'truth' to speak to his 'power.'

4.3 'Truth speaks to power' in the New Testament.

The New Testament tells many such stories too. In one narrative Jesus is told that he must judge, in public and before an angry crowd, the case of a woman caught committing adultery. In the Old Testament the Torah states that those caught in the act of this must be put to death.²⁰⁴ In this encounter²⁰⁵ Jesus, again, finds himself at odds with a prevailing negative narrative against those considered of less worth simply because of their gender. This is so embedded within Jewish society that those accusing the woman, and attempting to trap Jesus, can only perceive of two possible outcomes: Jesus either agrees that she must be stoned to death, or Jesus breaks with tradition and stands against the Torah. Other than Jesus, no one is listening to woman and even if they were they, like Job's friends, they would probably tell her that her predicament and imminent punishment were her own fault. However, God's economy of love, demonstrated through Jesus, transcends the inhuman position that the woman has been placed within and the flawed justice that is imposed upon her. Jesus ends this encounter with a new narrative that reminds the accusers of the truth that 'all have sinned and fall

²⁰³ *NIV Bible*. (2009). 2 Samuel 12:13.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* (2009). See: Deuteronomy 22:22 & Leviticus 20:10.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (2009). See: John's Gospel 8:1-11.

short of the glory of God.’²⁰⁶ Their offering of justice is overwhelmed by God’s economy of love. It is the transcendence of God as the ‘third’ party that enables her redemption. Whatever sin may, or may not, have been committed the woman cannot redeem herself and the crowd is unwilling to forgive. The act of forgiveness though does not ignore any sin as Jesus clearly tells her to ‘sin no more.’ God’s forgiveness is a framework in which justice is possible. Justice that ‘aims to deal openly and honestly with the facts of the world... forgiveness does not ignore the past...like justice forgiveness is a response to the wrong-doing that must understand and admit the wrong that has been done.’²⁰⁷ The crowd have to give up their demand for justice within a larger transcendent framework that requires the ‘third’ party of God.

Jesus often speaks ‘truth to power’ and challenges, what Fricker has helpfully called, epistemic injustice. A further example can be found in Mark’s Gospel 5:28. Here a woman, who has been bleeding internally for twelve years, seeks out Jesus in order to be healed by him. She does not dare to openly approach him and so secretly touches his cloak and is instantly healed. There are many social taboos at play in this narrative. First, the woman, because of her bleeding, makes anyone she comes into contact with ritually unclean; second, she should not ever touch a man, let alone a teacher of the Law; third, her shame at her illness should have prevented her from admitting to being the one who was healed by touching Jesus’ cloak; fourth, Jesus, once he knew who had touched him, should have shunned or reprimanded her. Instead of the correct social conduct that society demanded, the narrative shows Jesus, with God’s economy of love, relieving her of any shame and telling her that her faith has saved her. He calls her daughter, restoring her humanity and dignity, sending her away whole, healed, with his love and blessing upon her. She had been ostracised from her community and family for twelve years; her conduct before Jesus should have banished her entirely, perhaps even seen her stoned as punishment. Instead of this, Jesus speaks God’s ‘truth’ to society’s ‘power’ and turns the epistemic injustice in her life into one where personal justice for her is publically restored for all to witness. Jesus demonstrates epistemic mercy which turns epistemic injustice upon its head.

Sedmak, in response to the overwhelmingly crushing nature of epistemic injustice, offers epistemic mercy as a transformative approach. The former is a general concept that can negate the particulars of any individual circumstance, whereas the latter is

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* (2009). See: Romans 3:23.

²⁰⁷ Fiala, A. (2012). Radical forgiveness and human justice. The Heythrop Journal. Vol. 53; No. 3; pp. 494-506. Oxford: Wiley and Sons Ltd., p, 502.

localised, messy and ultimately is concerned ultimately with 'the quality of a knower who accepts the particularity and irreducibility of the individual and particular.'²⁰⁸ It aims to act as God would.

However, neither individuals nor communities can be made to accept epistemic mercy as it needs to be offered with vulnerability. Christ clearly offered himself in each and every encounter with the very real possibility of being rejected - even with violence. The one offering God's economy of love, therefore, needs to be prepared to have it rejected. Furthermore, it contains the need to accept that the pain of the wounds that people carry need to be held onto as they both necessitate the need for epistemic mercy, whilst also self-limiting its success in the healing that people can realistically be offered. This offer being less about knowledge or foresight, and far more about commitment to others as an act of attentive love. Epistemic mercy needs to start from a place of shared vulnerability.

4.4 Testimonial injustice prevents 'truth speaking to power.'

There are other more recent examples of 'truth' attempting to speak to oppressive power, but failing to do so. Epistemic injustice is a powerful force that, as the analysis of the *Daily Mail* has consistently shown, can be crushing upon the ones it targets. The articles examined and analysed showed a spectrum of demeaning and devaluing narratives that strip individual and groups of what little epistemic agency they had. The stripping left them vulnerable to attack and without any defence against the scapegoat mechanism which left them trapped as social pariahs.

A classic example of this can be found in the extraordinary story of Carolina Maria de Jesus. Carolina was born into poverty in Brazil in 1914. She experienced hunger, exclusion, ridicule and extreme poverty. As an adult she built her house out of bits of rubbish she found in the streets and she earned money for food for her family by selling bits of paper she found in the streets. However, despite all these cumulative disadvantages, a publisher who was doing research in her neighbourhood discovered that she had kept a daily personal diary detailing the actualities of living poverty. In 1960, with much public fanfare, her personal diary which traced the agony of living continually in impoverishment was published. This was the first time that her voice had been heard and offered her the beginnings of what could have become epistemic mercy.

²⁰⁸ Davies, O. Janz, P. & Sedmak, C. (2007). Transformation Theology. Church in the World. London: T&T Clark International., p, 146.

Here is one extract from her diary:

June 14 – It's raining and I can't go out looking for paper. On a rainy day I'm a beggar. I walk around ragged and dirty...I dug out an old umbrella that I found in the garbage and went out. At the slaughterhouse I got some bones. They'll do to make soup...I've tried to live on air and almost fainted.²⁰⁹

Levine,²¹⁰ who wrote a commentary about Carolina after her diary was published and then after her death in 1977, traced how her initial popularity quickly turned sour and the challenging way in which she fell foul to increased levels of testimonial injustice. The epistemic mercy she initially received quickly vanished. Levine tracked how after government officials, who met with her to talk about programmes to support those living in poverty, had come and gone, her neighbourhood then turned against her because she had more money than them and could move from her 'shack' into a brick built house. The media in Brazil then began to write negative narratives about her because she often had different sexual partners and struggled to behave in a manner expected by the middle class in Brazil. Levine writes that she

rocketed unexpectedly into fame, and Carolina Maria de Jesus went from one kind of pariah status to another: from a woman reviled for her illegitimacy and poverty to a woman criticized for her supposed ingratitude and for her lack of docility.²¹¹

The cruel reality of this story is that Carolina's life in poverty was initially heard by society, and even her government, for only a short period of time before more powerful voices deliberately and wilfully returned her to her previous pariah status. In addition, her voice had now been actively dis-credited, as opposed to the passive state of simply not being listened to prior to her diary being published. Her place and location in poverty gave her no voice; her diary only demonstrated that her voice, whatever the 'truth' in her narrative, attempted to 'speak to power' that had no intention of actually engaging with her or her issues. The 'power' responded by increasing the cumulative nature of her disadvantage and changed the location of her pariah status from a local one to being nationally ridiculed. This is a clear example of testimonial injustice

²⁰⁹ Caroline Maria de Jesus. (1962). *Child of the Dark: The Dairy of Caroline Maria de Jesus*. Translated by David St. Clair. London: Souvenir Press., p, 53.

²¹⁰ Levine, R & Meihy, J. (1995). *The Life and Death of Carolina Maria de Jesus*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Levine described how her diary was once on every bookstand in South America; it was not long before it could not be found to buy anywhere there. However, in contrast Carolina's diary is widely read today in University's across North America and Western Europe. It often appears on primary reading lists for courses such as Social Work and Psychology.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* (1995)., p, 182.

wrought upon someone living in poverty. This runs in parallel to Brueggemann's challenge that the Church should begin with Old Testament narrative and look for examples of this today in our society into which 'truth' should be speaking into 'power.' The press and middle class society in Brazil became Carolina's 'Pharaoh' who not only enslaved her further, but also ridiculed her publically.

Brueggemann's argument and challenge rests upon the belief that the Church, as an institution, has become too comfortable with and too tied to the status quo of epistemic injustice. This location prevents it from speaking a voice of 'truth' that speaks to 'power.' He calls upon the Church to courageously proclaim the Kingdom of God to a society that has:

lost its way in its easy violence against the vulnerable...lost its way in the uncritical exploitation of the less entitled...lost its way in its easy commitment to greed as a way of life...²¹²

Carolina, in a more devastating manner than even the examples highlighted in the *Daily Mail*, was turned into a scapegoat for her country by Brazilian society.

Carolina was marginalized in the press for her race, gender, socioeconomic status, and lack of education. This combination was seemingly too much for the general public and media to accept, and in turn Carolina Maria de Jesus was predominantly ostracized.²¹³

She cried out for her voice to be heard – a voice that was a 'witness of the hunger, suffering, and lack of social services and resources for the poor...' ²¹⁴ She also experienced what it was to be stripped bare by society in a cruel and unloving way; unheard and unheeded again.

Once a person, or group, is trapped within that 'web' of poverty (as described by CUF²¹⁵) they are then in such a vulnerable place that any social ill can be placed upon them as societies' scapegoat. There is a clear lack of epistemic mercy as damning narratives are directed at them. This thesis has shown that not only are people created as scapegoats and social pariahs, but also that they are often already the most vulnerable in

²¹² Brueggemann, W. (2013)., p, 161.

²¹³ Brown, K, A. (2011). The Political, Social, Historical, and Literary Significance of the Writings of Carolina Maria de Jesus. *All Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 2598. <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/2598>. Online., p, 10.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* (2011)., p, 26.

²¹⁵ CUF. (March 2014). This report claimed that there is a link between the poverty of *resources, relationships and identity* leading to a growing number of people who are living, perhaps permanently, in poverty. The data collated came from: the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Office for National Statistics, Citizenship Survey and Health Survey NHS.

society within this country. These narratives are both directed at those who are already vulnerable and are demeaning in their nature. For me, as a Christian, there is this fundamental question in the midst of this: must there be scapegoats?²¹⁶

4.5 Scapegoats.

In the Old Testament the narrative, in Leviticus 16²¹⁷, shows that scapegoating involved the actual sacrificial killing of an animal, namely a goat deliberately chosen for the role. However, a little further forward in history 'in the Greek world of the first millennium B.C.E, more closely contemporary with the biblical source, the archetypal scapegoat is a person, not an animal...a marginal person, such as a criminal, slave, or poor person.'²¹⁸ The scapegoat as a real person is shown a number of times by the analysis of the *Daily Mail*.²¹⁹ People were, as this thesis clearly demonstrates, partitioned, devalued, derided and crushed by stereotyping, insulting and derogatory language. The presence of evidence that these judgements are unjust appears to make little or no difference to these societal attitudes that assign others as scapegoats. Volf, in his work *Exclusion and Embrace*, argues that 'we demonise not because we do not know better, but because we refuse to know what is manifest and choose to know what serves our interests.'²²⁰ If society does not look at the actuality of the problem then, perhaps, it can continue pretending that there the problem is those who are living in poverty.

In Leviticus sixteen God's people are annually reminded that 'Israel has authorised for this day, by the goodness of YHWH, an annual festival of forgiveness and

²¹⁶ Schwager, S, J, R. (1987). *Must there be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*. New York: The Crossword Publishing Company. Schwager asks a fundamental question in the context of Jesus dying upon the cross: 'Did God free men and women from their hate in a similar way [to scapegoating] by offering them his beloved Son as a victim on whom they could unload their wickedness?', p, 209. Schwager took Girard's much celebrated *Scapegoat Mechanism* theory and embedded it deeper into Scripture. He agreed that Girard is correct in his assertion that all of humanity tends towards violence, hence the apparent need for any community to need scapegoats in order to maintain its internal cohesion. The self-sacrifice that Jesus makes not only reveals Girard's theory to be true, but then also creates a new world order in which scapegoating will no longer be necessary.

²¹⁷ *NIV Bible*. (2009). Leviticus 16:10: 'But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.' Feinberg argued that Leviticus 16 represents 'the Good Friday of the Old Testament...the Day of Atonement was the most important in the Mosaic system...on that day the removal of sin was given its highest expression.' Feinberg, C. (1958). *The Scapegoat of Leviticus Sixteen*. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (320-33). Dallas Theological Seminary., p, 320.

²¹⁸ Westbrook, R and Theodore J, L. (2008). *Who Led the Scapegoat in Leviticus 16:21?* *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 127, No. 3. pp. 417-422. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25610131>. Online., p, 419.

²¹⁹ For example: *Daily Mail* 10/03/14, p, 17-18. The article on Gemma Worrall that portrayed her as stupid. *Daily Mail* 17/02/14, pp., 22-24. The article that described the residents of the Channel Four programme 'Benefits Street' as 'those very shameless residents.'

²²⁰ Volf, M. (1996). *Exclusion and Embrace. A theological exploration of identity, otherness and reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press., p, 76.

reconciliation, an occasion of ritual symbolic practice for restoring life with YHWH.²²¹

The annual nature of this ritual means that it brings the people together allowing them space to remember the past, to let go of the previous year and any wrongs done; it also cements into their psyche the need to gather, to remember the past and to let go of recent iniquities. The repetitive nature of God's covenant in the Old Testament frames each and every year with festivals and ceremonies on the understanding that human beings need to be explicitly brought together and reminded of their responsibilities before God and each other.

At the core of this ritual is the killing of a goat as well as the releasing into the wilderness of the second goat that carries upon itself the sins of the people.²²² Whilst there is a focus upon the death of the first goat, there should also be a significant recognition that the second animal is excluded from the land and the people to which and to whom there can be no return. In this there is a fascinatingly chilling parallel to the modern day examples already examined within this thesis. Once Carolina de Maria Jesus had been made a public pariah and humiliated that there was never any possibility of 'returning' to the people or nation as an included and respected person; once a pariah, possibly, always a pariah? Even if it were possible for those made scapegoats, in the *Daily Mail* articles the return journey to acceptance and value within society had been made extremely difficult by the public nature of the ridiculing and the strength of the derogatory narratives deliberately directed at them.

A modern day example of this is demonstrated by the terrible tragedy that was the death of Peter Connelly, also known as baby 'P', in 2007.²²³ Whilst a number of newspapers highlighted the story it was both the *Sun* newspaper and the *Daily Mail* newspaper that headlined this story multiple times. There were a small group of social workers and council staff that were targeted by the newspapers, who were physically followed by multiple reporters for over two years and were then written about many times. A cursory reading of the many articles written highlights again the 'pantomime' style which portrayed characters in the story either as villains or heroes. However, a recent report from Professor Jones²²⁴ analyses the evidence of the Peter Connelly case alongside the

²²¹ Walter Brueggemann. (2002). Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press., p, 152.

²²² NIV Bible. (2009). Leviticus 16: 'The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.'

²²³ The story was known as the Baby P story. This related to Peter Connolly, 17 months old, who died at the hands of his mother, partner and his brother.

²²⁴ Professor Jones teaches at Kingston University and St George's, University of London. He was a Director of Social Services and Chair of the British Association of Social Workers.

newspaper reports. The report reveals the following: ‘characters in the narrative who initially seemed honourable and decisive have been revealed as opportunistic and cowardly; some who were portrayed as bunglers and incompetents have been shown to be unjustly scapegoated.’²²⁵ As of 2015 none of those who were scapegoated by these two newspapers for their ‘involvement’ in the Baby P death have yet be able to return to work within the profession that they were employed by at the time of Peter’s tragic death. Their reputations as professionals, because of the effects of scapegoating, have been left shredded. Furthermore, none of those labelled as pariahs by the media ever received a public apology.

4.6 Girard on Scapegoating.

Girard is best known for his seminal work on scapegoating and his theories on the rationale behind this destructive social behaviour. Girard, who became a Christian soon after receiving his PhD in 1950, met considerable academic opposition to his theory and seminal work on scapegoating. Some of this criticism was on the grounds that he used anthropology in order to promote Christianity, whilst also failing to formulate a coherent theological framework. However, Girard has never called himself a theologian. He began his academic career as a historian, developing his skills into literary criticism, and then moved into anthropology and ethnology.

At the core of Girard’s extraordinary theory of scapegoating are two keys words: mimesis²²⁶ and desire. His concept of mimetic behaviour goes beyond any simple translation of imitation. Girard believes that it involves the inhabiting of each other’s attitudes as a form of symbiosis that, as his theory suggests, occurs amongst human beings who take on other people’s attitudes as core to human behaviour. This is a natural human phenomenon and in itself is neither good nor bad. In essence each person looks for clues, and takes their cue, for what they should desire in life from the other people around them. Doran, in placing Girard and Lonergan alongside each other, argues that this is because each person is ‘painfully aware of their own emptiness, and it is this that leads them to crave so desperately the fullness of being that supposedly lies in others.’²²⁷

²²⁵ Jones, R. (2014). The Story of Baby P. Setting the record straight. Bristol: Policy Press., p, ix.

²²⁶ *Mimētikos*, ‘imitation,’ originates from the ancient Greek.

²²⁷ Doran, R. (2007). Summarizing “Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory.” Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture. Issue 14., pp, 27-38., p, 34.

Girard's theory shows that humans, because of this desire to be like each other and have each other's desires, emulate each other and become assimilated into 'sameness.' This leads to a growing tension that reaches a point where violence amongst that group becomes a very real possibility and in order for that group to remain cohesive, and not disintegrate, an arbitrary sacrifice is necessary in order to maintain order: hence the violent act of creating arbitrary scapegoats. The reality, for Girard, is that 'persecutors are never obsessed by difference but rather by its unutterable contrary, the lack of difference.'²²⁸ This very lack of difference between each human being, between each group, is perhaps more terrifying and leads to the human need to create the illusion of difference between groups: the in-group and the out-group (or scapegoat). This difference becomes labelled as wrong; this in turn creates the framework for the fears and vulnerabilities to be mollified by collectively sanctioned violence wrought upon the victim – which is now perceived to be different and, therefore, becomes the scapegoat that saves the rest of society from itself. Girard's work attempts to reveal to the world the inherent injustice that is both intrinsic and hidden within human behaviour.

4.6.1 Scapegoat mechanism.

His theory developed into a mechanism he called the *scapegoat mechanism* which explained how the death, or exile, of the arbitrarily chosen victim not only maintained order, but also is repeated in order to maintain the order. This theory gives the world a conceptual framework within which it can examine how communities have formed and are maintained. He traced this through both mythological and historical events where society continually sought scapegoats to blame for societal ills. His seminal work, 'The Scapegoat', examined many past communities that included some of the following: scapegoating by the gods in ancient Greek mythology, the Aztec practice of human sacrifice, the beheading of John the Baptist and the mediaeval practice of burning witches. Each one of these he examined through his methodological framework: the *scapegoat mechanism*.

Within Girard's theory is the observation that violence can spiral out of control and destroy the very community that people have sought to build. The community, fearing this, stops this from happening by finding a victim upon whom the blame can be

Doran, Professor at Marquette University, is general editor of the collected works of Bernard Lonergan. His research includes using Lonergan's theology of redemption and Girard's mimetic theory in dialogue together.

²²⁸ Girard, R. (1986). *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press p, 22.

displaced: the scapegoat.²²⁹ This violence is not an end in the process though as, argues Girard, violence leads into more violence as a self-replicating loop. There are two stages in this process that begin with the obvious accusation and targeting. However, the second stage centres on a ritual process whereby the scapegoat becomes ‘sacred’ amongst the community that has wrought violence upon it. Sacred things are often set apart from society and can include buildings that are barred from general access; the word itself carrying a strong sense of partitioning and separation.

The most controversial aspect, perhaps, of his theory rests upon the question that opens this chapter: must there be scapegoats? For communities to remain cohesive and divert violence that could undo its fabric, must there be an ongoing need for a scapegoat who is ‘sacrificed’ in order that the many may continue? Are people really oblivious of their own mimetic desire and the injustice done to yet another victim? Is this simply, if Girard is correct, how human communities will and must continue to operate in order to continue to exist as community? Does cohesion require a sacrifice? As this thesis has already demonstrated in chapter four, from the analysis of the *Daily Mail* articles, a key aspect of wilful blindness²³⁰ is that humanity needs to keep persuading itself to lean ‘upon various half-truths or downright lies which, like all propagandists, we keep repeating *ad nauseam*.’²³¹ Girard believes that humanity continues to live under the delusion that scapegoats are a necessary evil and that people choose to be oblivious to the phenomenon.

However, there is hope beyond this challenging issue. Girard offers Jesus as the alternative to the destructive *mimetic desire* that occurs between humans (from here on I will refer to this as *human mimetic desire*). Jesus does not reject *mimetic desire* itself as an evil methodology, rather appears to commend it by his actions and teachings.

Commentating upon Jesus’ *modus operandi* Girard says this about him: ‘the only way to avoid violence is to imitate me, and imitate the Father...the thing that is unique about Christianity is that it wants to go back to the sacrificial origin, and uncover it.’²³² Girard found this to be true from his reading and interpretation of the Gospel texts within which he found a unique narrative that called into question all of scapegoating

²²⁹ ‘Ultimately, the persecutors always convince themselves that a small number of people, or even a single individual, despite his relative weakness, is extremely harmful to the whole of society.’ Girard, R. (1986), p. 15.

²³⁰ Heffernan, M. (2012). The power of narrative in people’s lives, their attitudes and therefore the decisions or behaviours that they personally make and exhibit or support that underpins the psychology of ‘we believe what we want to.’

²³¹ Girard, R. (1996). *Eating Disorders and Mimetic Desire*. Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture. Volume 3, Spring 1996., pp. 1-20., p. 14.

²³² Girard, R & Williams, J, G. (1996). *The Girard reader*. New York: Crossroad., p. 63.

throughout history and literature. It ‘exposes the violence perpetrated by humans, sides with the victim, and thus calls humans to renounce violence in the name of the One who forged for us another way to live and die.’²³³ Scripture offers humanity a clear and unequivocal choice within which there is, theologically speaking, an unequal economy offered: choose either to follow the ongoing and destructive *human mimetic desire* or open ourselves to the loving pathway of *divine mimetic desire*.²³⁴ With regard to the former choice Ellul, but not in response to Girard, argues that ‘in human conduct...this thirst for self-justification is constant and fundamental.’²³⁵ Whereas to be justified by grace in God’s Kingdom, the latter choice, would mean to accept that none of our efforts will amount to anything and that Christians can only hope in and rely upon God. It is this that may often be humanity’s stumbling block as ‘this is what we can neither hear nor accept. When we act, we want our action to serve some end, to succeed, to bring progress. We want to do it all ourselves.’²³⁶ For the Church, and thereby its prophetic proclamation to the world, it is at the Last Supper, in the ritual, and then on the Cross, by His death, where Jesus becomes the ‘embodying of a love that opposes violence, and where Jesus demonstrates conclusively his response to a vocation of self-gift.’²³⁷ In Jesus there is an extraordinary and absolute hospitality at the heart of the ultimate cost that is paid by Him. His self-gift, of Himself, is offered to all humanity who are all guests at his invitation. Therefore, the reliance for humanity, in *divine mimetic desire*, upon Christ needs to also be complete and without reservation.

4.6.2 Jesus as the unique scapegoat.

Girard argues that ‘Jesus dies, not as a sacrifice, but in order that there may be no more sacrifices...rather than become the slave of violence, as our own word necessarily does, the Word of God says no to violence.’²³⁸ It is in this death that the hiddenness of the self-replicating nature of human violence, the *scapegoat mechanism*, becomes revealed

²³³ Girard, R. (2000). *Violence Renounced: Biblical Studies and Peacemaking*. Edited by Swartley, W. Telford: Pandora Press., p, 26.

²³⁴ Lonergan, as a philosopher and theologian who combined thought and feelings in his works, wrote about the desire to know God and the new beginning for humanity when we fall in love with God. ‘God takes over. God’s love floods our hearts.’ Lonergan, B. (1972). *Method in Theology*. USA: Herder and Herder Inc., p, 105. Within this relationship of love, we are then drawn into the act of imitating the Triune God who is who we should desire to be like instead. It is from reading aspects of Lonergan that I have chosen to paraphrase Girard in creating the dialectic phrases *human mimetic desire* that stands clearly in opposition to *divine mimetic desire* – that is to desire to be like God.

²³⁵ Ellul, J. (1986)., p, 159.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* (1986)., p, 171.

²³⁷ Williams, R. (2002). *Resurrection. Interpreting the Easter Gospel*. Great Britain: Berforts Information Press Ltd., p, 99.

²³⁸ Girard, R & Williams, J, G. (1996)., p, 184.

to all humanity as both a reality and as a re-occurring evil in the world. The divine revelation at the cross tore apart the veil that was blinding each community from the reality of its inherent *human mimetic desire*. The cross theologically states that the need to find a scapegoat, upon whom to shift the blame, is the ultimate height in both human self-delusion and wrong-doing.

The unique nature of the Jesus narrative is that this man, whilst innocent of all crimes, is sacrificed to ‘protect the security of the community (John 11:50), but appeared from the dead, among those who colluded with his betrayal and execution, to proclaim peace.’²³⁹ Girard, in his Christology, clearly argues that,

the crucial thing is that there is *Someone* who is both ready and able to take their guilt upon himself. None of the other scapegoats was able to do this.²⁴⁰

Christ as a unique scapegoat, one who chose to be a pariah for all humanity, alone²⁴¹ is unjustly charged and dispatched from this world. In doing so Jesus, divinely, reveals the hidden existent and the ludicrous nature of the *scapegoat mechanism*. The latter is inherently and epistemically unjust; whereas the incarnate Christ offers himself as the unconditional gift of epistemic mercy.

At the core of this Christology is also the very nature of Jesus who was both fully human and fully divine. This incarnate nature demonstrates that humans do not need ‘to cease to be the sort of animal that they are in order to see the lie which has constituted them. Put in other words: we are capable of recognizing that we are wrong.’²⁴²

There is, therefore, a very real sense that Girard’s theory is, and must be, intensely personal to each and every person. If there is truth within it then every human being is behaving in this *mimetic* manner and each of us, therefore, share responsibility for the ongoing creation of scapegoats in our own communities. His theory strips humanity of its pretence that we have no choice in this societal phenomenon. Our individuality also becomes stripped away as our choices are limited to the interdependency of *human mimetic desire* that latches onto whomever and whatever is co-located around us. Each and every human being, therefore, is also a living example of what the Church would

²³⁹ Kerr, F. (1992). Revealing the Scapegoat Mechanism: Christianity after Girard. Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement. Volume 32. March 1992., pp. 161-175., p, 171.

²⁴⁰ Balthasar, H, U, V. (1989). You Crown the Year With Your Goodness. USA: Ignatius Press., p, 62.

²⁴¹ Niv Bible. (2009). Romans 3:23: ‘for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...’ Christ, as the Incarnate God, stands alone as the only innocent victim who is made into a scapegoat.

²⁴² Alison, J. (1991). The Joy of Being Wrong. Original Sin Through Easter Eyes. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company., p, 304.

suggest is the fundamental flaw within humanity itself: Humans, as imperfect beings, need God and His Kingdom to complete them. However, according to Girard, humanity continues, through *human mimetic desire*, to desire the flawed attitudes and attributes in each other instead. The *scapegoat mechanism* reveals the fundamental lie that humanity continues to live with the scandalous realization that each event of scapegoating throughout history ‘turns out to be only a ganging together of evil doers and brings about pure destruction.’²⁴³

Brueggemann through his works consistently argues that all of God's children are called to live under God's commandments and covenant in all situations. Living this way means, he often argues, freeing those who are oppressed or captive in anyway, looking after those in need or who have been broken, and leading people into freedom.

Brueggemann, in his books, often points to unjust structures within society that allow some to maintain a power base over those who are treated badly by such societal, economic or political parameters. However, his works are primarily an analytical approach to the interactive process that has happened, and continues to happen, within the relationship between God and his children. It is in this relational core that a fundamental similarity between Brueggemann and Girard is to be found. Both men begin with and work through the issue, throughout their works, of relationships between people and between God and his people.

Both Girard and Brueggemann show deep concern in their works to discover what lies beneath, and at the heart, of religious texts and through this concern to be subversive in the realities that emerge. It is in the critical nature of their visionary approaches that a subversive narrative arises to challenge the status quo. Both present new conceptual frameworks that challenge the world to understand God as the ultimate relational being upon whom we should model ourselves and be imitators of. Each one pointing less to their own works as a light shining towards a better future, but moreover to God as the antidote and resolution to the ongoing negative forces in society

Brueggemann continues to argue the Church has a prophetic role which comes from a teleological hope emanating from a loving God. The Church is called ‘to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.’²⁴⁴ Transformation, argues Brueggemann,

²⁴³ Schwager, R, S, J. (1987)., p, 233. Schwager's, University of Innsbruck, book first published in 1978 speaks critically into Girard's early work and demonstrates how his theory speaks directly into violence in the world today.

²⁴⁴ Brueggemann, W. (2001). *The Prophetic Imagination*. London: Fortress Press., p, 99.

is possible because of the work done on the cross by the Incarnate God. The issue for him is not whether it is possible, but whether the Church will respond to the divine calling to be prophetic in the world.

The Church, he argues, has become concurrent with the prevailing culture of epistemic injustice, rather than seeking to demonstrate how different God's Kingdom is from the existing patterns of behaviour and accepted narratives. The Church has a duty to live out and demonstrate what epistemic mercy, as opposed to the status quo of epistemic injustice, should look like.

4.7 The Church should respond.

Two prominent theologians, Volf and Bretherton, often draw upon either personal or witnessed experiences of suffering and injustice when they challenge the Church to respond and be prophetic in the world. Volf, drawing upon his own personal experiences of living in war-torn Croatia, discusses the scandalous nature of the Cross²⁴⁵ - and a God who comes to earth in order that, as a self-giving incarnate God, He could die for all of humanity. In one of his many prophetic challenges to the Church Volf says this: 'A genuinely Christian reflection on social issues...will have to be thought through from the perspective of the self-giving love of God.'²⁴⁶ Bretherton, also writing from the perspective of the Balkans conflict, says this: 'The public work of the church is thus to be an agent of healing and repair within the political, economic, and social order, contradicting the prideful, violent and exclusionary logics at work in the *saeculum*.'²⁴⁷ The time in which the Church waits for the Kingdom to be fulfilled is also a period of inconsistency and dissonance as everything that is attempted can only be partial and imperfect. It is within that reality and context that the Church has a prophetic task. Volf's theology springs from his desire to see the 'cycle of violence' broken within society. For Volf, as for the Church, it is the self-sacrificing of Christ on the cross that breaks this cycle. Jesus' choice to die is just that; it was an assertive and loving choice that reveals to the world its own dysfunctional and violent state. Volf concurs with Girard's theory that the cross reveals and unmask the existence and nature of the hidden *scapegoating* mechanism. However, in a similar manner to Brueggemann, he challenges Girard's naivety towards human nature saying this: 'Girard takes too lightly

²⁴⁵ 'As an expression of the will to embrace the enemy the cross is no doubt a scandal in a world suffused with hostility.' Volf, M. (1996)., p, 126.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (1996)., p, 25.

²⁴⁷ Bretherton, L. (2010). Christianity and Contemporary Politics. The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell., p, 210.

people's tendency to re-mask what has been de-masked when it fits their interests.'²⁴⁸

Therefore, Volf argues, Girard did go far enough in his study on the *scapegoat mechanism*. There needs to be something much more intentional in any active response to Girard's revelation of this evil act. What stands against Girard's hope of a transformed world, once the 'cycle of violence' that perpetuates itself in scapegoating had been revealed, is that modernity encourages both 'disengagement and commitment avoidance.'²⁴⁹ Therefore, it is not enough to simply state what is now obvious, with respect to the *scapegoating mechanism*, and optimistically expect humanity to transform itself in light of the truth revealed. The truth needs to be proclaimed in order to 'mobilize the displaced to new possibility, to summon them out beyond the assumptions of the empire'²⁵⁰ and shake humanity out of its own masquerade of wilful blindness. This begins to answer the next chapter's task of what specifically should the response from the Church be. The Church is called to be prophetic and awaken the world from its present misery and show it a future that is different. However, 'that future...distinctively different from an unbearable present...is energizing only for those for whom the present has become unbearable.'²⁵¹ Reality needs to be revealed as an ongoing proclamation, especially for those who do not want to hear it - including the Church which as part of this world can also be part of the problem. The Church needs to hear and understand this message for itself first before it has a hope of helping others to do likewise. Throughout both Volf's and Bretherton's works there are recurring themes of *intentionality, accommodation, forgiveness and hospitality*. These themes, explored below, are at the heart of the crucifixion narrative and they can hold the Church to its core beliefs. These can, most importantly, prevent the Church from engaging in a counter-attack or counter narrative against the perpetrators of negative narratives. Counter narratives can easily alienate the very people that they are trying to reach. They can create a blame culture that condemns those who were perpetrating, or simply agreeing with, the negative narratives that are being challenged. This can simply have the effect of creating new scapegoats. The danger in any counter-narrative is that is simply swaps one set of individuals, who had been labelled as pariahs, for another. John's Gospel clearly stands against this approach, and counter-effect, in one of its most well-known Christological statements:

²⁴⁸ Volf, M. (1996)., p, 292.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (1996)., p, 156.

²⁵⁰ Brueggemann, W. (2010)., p, 91.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* (2001)., p, 111.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.²⁵²

A counter narrative that stereotyped perpetrators, or those perceived to be guilty, of negative narratives would be fundamentally unhelpful, counter-productive and biblically flawed. It would not offer epistemic mercy or agency to all. It would simply perpetuate a partitioned society.

4.7.1 Intentionality.

First, there is the core Christian concept of self-giving love on the cross. The divine plan, of coming to earth, becoming incarnate, and dying on the cross which led to the restorative act of the resurrection, was both wholly and holy intentional. Christ ascending into heaven and leaving his disciples to wait upon the Holy Spirit, before establishing the Church, was wholly and holy intentional. God acts intentionally.

This intentionality provides the safe and loving boundaries for humanity without which will 'aimless drifting instead of clear-sighted agency, haphazard activity instead of moral engagement and accountability...'²⁵³ Volf, drawing upon the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) exploring the broken relationships within the narrative. In the story the two sons and the father are damaged in different ways. However, the father holds them together in an economy of love and finds a way to embrace them because he is 'guided by indestructible love and supported by a flexible order'²⁵⁴ that is inherently intentional. The father was always going to show unconditional love to his runaway son; nothing would have prevented or changed that.

4.7.2 Accommodation.

Volf recalls, from personal experiences in Croatia during the war in the ex-Yugoslavia, when rationales were used for killings on each side in the conflict. Volf argues that the rationale of "no choice" is a world which perpetrators would like us to inhabit because it grants an advance absolution to any wrongdoing they desire to commit.²⁵⁵ A Kingdom approach uses a very different starting point. In contrast to simply tolerating those who

²⁵² NIV Bible. John's Gospel 3:16-17.

²⁵³ Volf, M. (1996)., p, 65.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* (1996)., p, 165.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (1996)., p,86.

are different, the Gospel has an ‘imperative to enter into relationship with, and accommodate, those who are different.’²⁵⁶ When loving relationships are formed then accommodation can be made by each person for both disagreement and challenge.

4.7.3 Forgiveness.

Jesus, in the Gospels, often called people to repent whether they were the religious elite or those oppressed by overwhelmingly weight of Biblical law laid upon them. Everyone was called to repent and there is no sense, in redemption theology, of any partitioning between those who can be forgiven and those who will not. Whilst there were ‘victims’ that Jesus attended to, there is nobody that Scripture considers blameless.²⁵⁷ Therefore, Jesus leaves humanity with a clear choice: ‘Forgiveness is the only way out of the predicament of partiality... forgiveness breaks the power of the remembered past and transcends the claims of the affirmed justice and so makes the spiral of vengeance grind to a halt.’²⁵⁸ However, for those who have been abused, tortured or seen family members killed, this message of forgiveness may appear to lack the justice that they might be seeking. Therefore, the question must be asked: whose understanding of justice should be pre-eminent here? Volf argues that ‘there can be no justice without the will to embrace...to agree on justice you need to make space...for the perspective of the other and [for this to happen] you need to want to embrace the other.’²⁵⁹ Volf calls for justice to be seen through the lens of love, indestructible love, rather than love through the lens of justice. It matters which lens society chooses to use and, he argued, there has always been a choice.

4.7.4 Hospitality.

Bretherton reclaims an Old Testament understanding of hospitality, which made considerable demands upon the host, and passes it through the lens of the New Testament as he declares that the actions of being hospitable are what display Christian holiness. Jesus, in his manner of turning people’s perspectives upside down, teaches that ‘hospitality becomes the means of holiness...it is in Jesus’ hospitality of pagans, the

²⁵⁶ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Hospitality as Holiness. Christian witness amid moral diversity*. Great Britain: MPG Books Group., p, 148.

²⁵⁷ *NIV Bible*. (2009). Romans 3: 22-23. ‘This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...’ There is no difference between, in God’s judgement, the best and worst of people. Everyone is a sinner and no one is blameless.

²⁵⁸ Volf, M. (1996)., p, 121.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (1996)., p, 220.

unclean, and sinners that his own holiness is shown forth.’²⁶⁰ These are acts that are grounded in God's intentionality.

It is Volf, himself, who introduces the concept of “absolute hospitality’ [which] seems generous and peaceful, until one remembers that unrepentant perpetrators and their unhealed victims...sit around the same table and share a common home.’²⁶¹ Violence, pain and suffering cannot be undone, nor should it be forgotten. The uneasy and uncomfortable truth is that it too, the memory and aftereffects of the violence, are always present.

Part of the prophetic role for the Church, with an orthodoxy and orthopraxis of indestructible love, is to sit between the perpetrator and victim as Christ does for the world. Jesus died on the cross and stood in the gulf between the two seemingly diametric places of heaven and creation. Bretherton continually highlights the need for a prophetic church and the difficulties that arise when it acts this way. When there is a loving ‘focus on the vulnerable stranger...this will mean that the church finds itself actively opposed by those who would be...inhospitable...thus the Christian practice of hospitality is often, because of its priorities, deeply prophetic, calling into question the prevailing political hegemony.’²⁶²

The mission for the Church to respond to the world, trapped in its *human mimetic desire*, begins to then have a Biblical integrity. This, is of course, a mission that it cannot boast of, rather it is the Godhead that has a mission (*Missio Dei*) of indestructible love and absolute hospitality to proclaim through its prophetic Church. ‘As a community of the cross the church then constitutes the fellowship of the kingdom...[and]...it invites people to the feast without end.’²⁶³ An invitation to a place that is *intentional, accommodating, forgiving and hospitable*.

4.8 How counter-narratives can heal.

These themes are foundational for the Church. If the Church begins from them it can, experience demonstrates, develop a different type of counter-narrative that can begin to heal even a divided nation. It can develop a healing narrative that permeates pain, injustice and allow muted voices to speak freely. The key principle which emerges from the following analysis of an extraordinary turning point in South Africa's apartheid

²⁶⁰ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Hospitality as Holiness*., p, 130.

²⁶¹ Volf, M. (2001)., p, 47.

²⁶² Bretherton, L. (2010). *Hospitality as Holiness*., pp.. 212-213.

²⁶³ Bosch, D, J. (2002)., p, 519.

history is that those who had been silenced were given as much space and time to speak for themselves as they needed. No one tried to speak on their behalf. Whilst some might have tried to, even in a benevolent manner, it would have been yet another abuse of an already vulnerable people who had experienced truncated and muted citizenship.

The world listened and watched, nearly two decades ago, to the challenging and unfolding stories of abuse and suffering through the public forum of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This form acted as a safe space for both victims and perpetrators in South Africa between 1996 and 1999. It was chaired by the internationally renowned cleric Archbishop Desmond Tutu and was underpinned by an Act of Parliament. The TRC investigated, but did not aim to prosecute, abuses of human rights between 1960 and 1994. The rationale behind it was the creation of a framework or environment, often referred to as Restorative Justice, through which both victims and perpetrators on all sides of the racial divides in South Africa²⁶⁴ could be brought together in public. They heard each other's accounts and shared their pain; this experience led to significant accounts of personal healing. It was often criticised for not seeking any prosecution of abusers who were often given amnesty for attending and sharing, in depth, the story of their involvement as perpetrators. However, the success of the process called Restorative Justice is arguably in its ability to persuade perpetrators to share a fuller, deeper and 'thicker' account of what happened and why. The environment that the TRC created invited all those involved in the brokenness to sit down together in spite of the inevitable pain involved. The abiding aim of the TRC was, through the open public hearings, to promote understanding of South Africa's abusive history so that its people could begin to heal and move away from condemnation and the creation of scapegoats. The amnesty, much criticised, granted to the perpetrators two parallel opportunities: first it gave people freedom to speak openly without fear of prosecution; second it left the 'door' open so that those perpetrators, who would continue to live and work in South Africa, could continue to sit at the 'table' and learn to live alongside those they had abused and/or the relatives that were left living. Its grace, in Biblical terms, was that it sought never to create scapegoats that the country could turn its anger - or grief-fueled pain upon. In essence it took the pain and suffering created by the consequences of epistemic injustice and offered the safe space of epistemic mercy for any who wanted it.

²⁶⁴ Over 70% are Black African; White and Coloured each account for approximately one tenth of the population.

Archbishop Tutu, said this at the beginning of the final extensive report²⁶⁵: ‘let us shut the door on the past – not in order to forget it but in order not to allow it to imprison us. Let us move into the glorious future of a new kind of society where people count...because they are persons of infinite worth created in the image of God.’²⁶⁶ Throughout the process there was a gentle, but explicit environment in which God was invited to be present as that transcendent ‘third’ party.

Victims heard, many for the first time, who had been involved in the state sponsored abuse and why they had perpetrated their crimes. The report, in highlighting also the number of black young people who suffered human rights abuses, said this: ‘those who grew up under conditions of violence will carry this into adulthood...despite their sufferings, they have shown extraordinary generosity and tolerance and have reached out to their former oppressors in a spirit of reconciliation.’²⁶⁷ This process was intentional in its aim to accommodate people with hospitality, whether victim and/or perpetrator,²⁶⁸ and in doing so created an environment where victims felt secure enough to offer forgiveness, voluntarily and never under duress, and then walk away from the process, to some extent, free from the abuse they had experienced.²⁶⁹

In its attempts to intentionally accommodate the voiceless the TRC report published an extensive list of names of people whom they could verify had suffered human rights abuses. This list contained over 16,000 names which was then further added to in later reports. There was an emphasis upon the individual, their experiences of pain, their narrative of abuse and them themselves being heard as a named and individual human being. At the heart of the TRC process was a profoundly Christian perspective of the fullness of participation summed up within the African word *ubuntu*. Tutu says that this word ‘speaks of the very essence of being human...my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours...I am human because I belong, I participate, I share...’²⁷⁰ This synergy that *ubuntu* calls for across the entirety of humanity means that without it not only are those who are shunned effectively de-humanised, but also so are those doing the exclusion. It reveals the truth that all of humanity is lessened when even

²⁶⁵ The report itself was published in 1999 in five volumes which briefly contained the following: Its methodology, the abuses committed, the victim’s perspectives, the state of the country at the time, and recommendations for the future.

²⁶⁶ Tutu, D. ed. (1999). Volumes 1-5 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report. USA: The University of Virginia., Vol. 1. Paragraph 91.

²⁶⁷ Tutu, D. ed. (1999)., Vol. 3. Paragraphs 117-118.

²⁶⁸ The reality was that there were some people who were both victim and perpetrator.

²⁶⁹ Victims would often approach the hearing almost in ‘a foetal position...they told their story as they experienced them...as they left their seat they walked tall.’ Tutu, D. ed. (1999)., Vol 5. Paragraph 37.

²⁷⁰ Tutu, D. (1999). No future without forgiveness. London: Rider., p, 31.

one of us is demeaned. The act of demeaning others is a self-demeaning act.

Transforming communities into a place where epistemic agency is shared is a complex and challenging task. It requires communities to accept that ‘none is an outsider, all are insiders, all belong...’²⁷¹ The TRC intentionally attempted to create an environment of hospitality where *ubuntu* could be possible in the nation of South Africa. However, the TRC never intended to be the final word, rather to begin a conversation about transforming a people’s ontology and, thereby, praxis that needs to continue in perpetuum. The TRC’s approach, as the start of an ongoing process, demonstrated ‘the genuine difficulty of linking justice and forgiveness in a world without God...Christianity grounds forgiveness.’²⁷² Whilst the TRC hearings were, mainly, public and watched by many there was a culture created where victims could, if they wanted to, offer forgiveness and perpetrators accept it. A safe space where epistemic mercy, beginning with the very real testimonies of pain and hurt, could flourish. A safe space where their right to speak was championed and protected.

4.9 Concluding thoughts.

A valid case is made that the Church has a prophetic role to play in responding to the real and current existence of negative narratives directed at, and devaluing, those living in poverty. The Church has a duty to the world around it and ‘Christians cannot stand outside their environment, or against others, but must participate in their wider culture...’²⁷³ In addition, the argument has also been made for the manner in which the Church should respond because ‘in relation to Christian involvement in the community such action is not self-generated or self-subsisting but derived from the prior, originating power of God.’²⁷⁴ The starting point needs to be the self-giving of God, through the incarnate God dying upon the cross. It is through this act of hospitality that is an absolute, from which the Church should begin. It is only through hospitality, Bretherton argues, that holiness can be found; it practically begins from the willingness of the Church to hear the “others’ interests and concerns in the context of ongoing relationships...and in fostering the sense that in each other’s welfare we find our own.”²⁷⁵ This desire to live out epistemic mercy stands in stark contrast to the self-demeaning act of demeaning other through negative narratives.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* (1999)., p, 265.

²⁷² Fiala, A. (2012)., p, 499.

²⁷³ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Hospitality as Holiness*., p, 113.

²⁷⁴ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*., p, 98.

²⁷⁵ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*., p, 88.

Chapter 5: 'Act.' How the Church should respond.

The public work of the church is thus to be an agent of healing and repair within the political, economic, and social order, contradicting the prideful, violent and exclusionary logics at work in the *saeculum*.²⁷⁶

5.1 Epistemic mercy for the voiceless.

As this thesis has demonstrated those that are heard and listened to are acknowledged as bearers of knowledge – as epistemic agents. Whereas those that are not have been placed on mute as if silent. This act ‘silences the voices of the powerless...enacting patterns of dehumanizing testimonial injustice...it is at once personally and socially damaging’²⁷⁷ and denies them epistemic mercy. This social condition traps people in that 'web of poverty' described by CUF - a trap that describes both the effects of poverty, as a multi-dimensional issue, and the consequences of denying people epistemic agency.

This thesis demonstrates an ongoing culture of testimonial injustice that can easily lead to secondary cumulative disadvantages for the individuals. Fricker calls this condition the ‘loss of epistemic confidence.’²⁷⁸ Those who have been stripped bare, unheard and unheeded, can experience a loss of confidence in themselves as agents or bearers of knowledge. This can lead to reduced expectations, such as an unwillingness to look for new opportunities or to take them when offered, and a lack of resistance to oppressive behaviour. Those who have been effectively placed on ‘mute’ and been redefined as non-participant (or not fit to participate) by societal attitudes are unlikely to offer their opinions even if asked. However, they are unlikely to be asked for their opinion in the first place due to the nature of ‘*pre-emptive* testimonial injustice’²⁷⁹ which describes how the vulnerable may already be regarded as ‘bankrupt’ of any credibility belying any thought of asking and listening to them. Many of those highlighted in the analysis of the *Daily Mail* were made 'epistemically bankrupt' by the damning narratives that were directed on them. The theological injustice lies in that truth that no one had the right to do that to them, and that in doing so both those responsible for the articles and those agreeing with them are demeaned and devalued too.

²⁷⁶ Bretherton, L. (2010). *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, p, 210.

²⁷⁷ Miranda F. (2007). Reviewed by Lorraine Code, York University. <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23398-epistemic-injustice-power-and-the-ethics-of-knowing>. Online.

²⁷⁸ Fricker, M. (2006)., p, 104.

²⁷⁹ Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford Scholarship Online. September 2007. DOI. 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001., p, 130.

It is, perhaps, at this point that well-meaning people (including those in the Church) choose to speak on behalf of those who have been muted - to champion them. This is a role I have seen many in Church take on and one that I too, to my shame, have engaged in as well. This is a dangerous role to take on, as the power and agency continues to be held in the hands of the intervenor who already has epistemic agency, and not the muted who do not. This approach, although well-meaning, continues to maintain power over the 'other.' It offers little epistemic mercy, rather it runs the very real risk of becoming benevolent control as the muted person's voice is interpreted through another's framework and filter before ever being heard by the outside world. The one on mute does not get the opportunity or space to speak for themselves.

Foucault, in his exploration of social control, discusses this highly significant issue. It is, he states, 'a normalizing gaze...that makes it possible to qualify and to classify...It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them.'²⁸⁰ This creates the environment for a 'normalizing judgment'²⁸¹ that both creates and maintains the marginalization and silencing of vulnerable people. It is in response to this that there needs to be an epistemic transformation in the generosity of those who already have epistemic agency, which gives to the marginalized the same epistemic credence that we afford ourselves - the space to speak for themselves with their own voice.

A significant intervention, which the Church should take the lead in, is required to create environments for epistemic mercy to flourish. It requires something to be done. It will be naturally chaotic because it would involve people who come with unpredictable behaviour, multiple questions and differing issues. Within that chaos will also be the experiences of pain and discomfort when attempting to bring together people who may be a mixture of victim and perpetrator - some inhabiting both at the same time. This is the harsh reality and location that the Church needs to inhabit daily if it intentionally works towards restoring justice in the lives of those currently regarded within society as epistemically bankrupt.

5.2 A prophetic calling on the Church.

This is, therefore, a prophetic call to a ministry of healing and reconciliation that will take the Church to the difficult place of intervention – a place of tension which Bauman beautifully describes. He states that this 'requires abandoning the tendency to suppress

²⁸⁰ Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and Punish. The birth of the prison. London: Penguin Books., p, 184.

²⁸¹ Gutting, G. (2005). Foucault. A very short introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p, 84.

other identities in the name of the self-assertion of one's own, while accepting, on the contrary, that it is precisely the guarding of other identities that maintains the diversity in which one's own uniqueness can thrive.'²⁸² It is within this place of intervention, in order to create space for reconciliation, that the Church will meet opposition and will need to be determined to remain fixed upon God's economy of love.

This is not new territory for the Church though, as it has always had a duty to proclaim the Kingdom of God through its work for justice and concern for those in need. Its work has continually involved challenging unjust structures in society as a body called to be as concerned with its own human flourishing, before God, as it is with flourishing of all creation. This role has seen the Church prophetically engage with negative narratives from the earliest times through to present day.

During the fourth century AD St John Chrysostom,²⁸³ most well-known for his outspoken approach to poverty, met negative attitudes in his time that mirrored those this paper has analysed and presented. Into the highly organised and hierarchical Roman society, Chrysostom, alongside a number of other Patristic writers,²⁸⁴ challenged society about poverty. For them, often, 'practicing what was "right" towards those in need meant treating the poor *as* Christ, enacting legal fairness...'²⁸⁵ Christian hospitality required the 'giver' to view all those receiving *as* if they were actually giving the help, food, and opportunities to Christ himself. This necessitated, he argued, a clear willingness to meet the 'other' on an equal footing in order to share of each other, with each other. The nature of Christian self-giving determined that all interaction between peoples 'must take place within a relation of mutual exchange.'²⁸⁶ This equality offered a world where people intentionally accommodated each other with epistemic agency through the hospitable act of mercy - epistemic mercy.

Holman, writing about this period of history, argues that it is during this early time that the Church begins to preach this message: 'imitate God and extend love not only to kin and friends but to all in need...'²⁸⁷ – and that the problems of those living in poverty

²⁸² Bauman, Z. (1995). *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell., p, 285.

²⁸³ He began religious life as a monk and wanted to live as an ascetic in the desert. However, he ministered to the poor and preached against greed in Antioch for twelve years and then continued to do so when he became the Archbishop of Constantinople in 398AD. He was often derided by wealthy and powerful people who scorned his message.

²⁸⁴ These include some of the following: Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Salvian of Lerin and Jacob of Sarug.

²⁸⁵ Holman, S, R. (2009). *God knows there's need. Christian responses to poverty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p, 139.

²⁸⁶ Johnson, S, K. (2007). *The Fear of Beggars. Stewardship and Poverty in Christian Ethics*. Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p, 178.

²⁸⁷ Ed. Holman, S. (2008). *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society. Holy Cross Studies in*

become the problems of the Church.

Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby, as two present day leaders, represent between them approximately 1.2 billion members of the Catholic Church and 85 million members of the Anglican Communion. In 2013 Pope Francis published ‘*Evangelii Gaudium*’ which is an extensive document that examines a number of worldly and spiritual issues in considerable depth. He stated in it that ‘none of us can think we are exempt from concern for those living in poverty and for social justice...’²⁸⁸ Justin Welby, who has spoken many times on challenging injustice with a prophetic voice, said this at the Church Urban Fund’s annual conference in 2013: ‘the common good of the whole community and justice for all are absolutely central to what it means to be a Christian. They flow from the love of Jesus on the Cross, offering salvation, enabling justice and human freedom.’²⁸⁹

Pope Francis, in his love for the Church, also declares how important the local church is to the *mission dei*. The Parish Church, at the heart of each community, needs to be ‘living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.’²⁹⁰ It, as the vehicle of light in each community, must embody the belief ‘that Jesus shed his blood for us removing any doubt about the boundless love which ennoble each human being.’²⁹¹ It is from this place of absolute security, within the unfathomable depths of God’s hospitality to the entire world, that a local parish church can claim the authority given it by God to live out its ultimate calling for ‘the integral development of society’s most neglected members.’²⁹² Each of these international leaders continually call for epistemic justice to be restored to those who are denied epistemic agency. Neither show any signs of being cynical about their organisations ability to be the catalyst for transformation. Each of them demonstrate faith in the Church, especially in the local parish church, and are bold in their challenge to be self-sacrificing promoting and enabling epistemic mercy for any who are being derided, demeaned and denied a voice.

Patristic Theology and History. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic., p, 192.

²⁸⁸ Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium*.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html. Online. Para 201, p, 159.

²⁸⁹ Speech by Justin Welby. *Seeking Justice is ‘Absolutely Central’ to Christian faith*. CUF Conference. 13th November, 2013. <http://www.cuf.org.uk/blog/seeking-justice-absolutely-central-christian-faith-says-archbishop>. Online.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.* (2013)., Para 28, p, 26.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* (2013)., Para 178, p, 140.

²⁹² *Ibid.* (2013)., Para 186, p, 147.

5.3 Creating space for epistemic mercy.

The Church, as a vehicle for the light of Christ in the world, is not designed to be the answer in itself, but simply a sign pointing to the Kingdom and any foretaste of it. This 'foretaste' is not simply an abstract analysis concerning the nature of God and human beings. We come to understand the nature of Jesus, the Man-God, by seeing, imitating and deciphering Jesus with and alongside others. The task is 'the task of prophetic ministry which is to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.'²⁹³

The Church should act and engage with this pressing social issue of negative narratives. The Church of England can, and does, offer to host 'safe space' forums in a localised manner (such as the occasional poverty forum hearings in Cornwall referred to at the beginning of this thesis). It also has demonstrated, in extraordinarily controversial and fraught environments, how it can host safe space and hold competing tensions between those alleged to be perpetrator or victim.²⁹⁴ The Church is well aware that it has a duty to ameliorate challenging social issues such as those explored and examined by this thesis. It is well aware that there are people across this country who, living in poverty, have become trapped in a complex 'web' and are held there by the truncating of their citizenship through a deliberate denial of epistemic agency. People who are targeted with demeaning narratives that scapegoat them.

It is safe space that is required for epistemic mercy to flourish. This space would create opportunities for those, who feel unheard and unheeded, to begin to explore epistemic agency. This safe space would also be a forum where truth could be freely explored, people's personal experiences drawn upon, and each person encourage to be reflective and self-critical of their starting perspectives. This safe space is akin to a bridge that would create pathways between differing and divergent positions. Rather than trying to achieve an end result, that had been predetermined, it would be concerned with the process and journey that people went on together.

This is not a fanciful or amorphous concept. There are concrete examples of the Church of England engaging in such a safe space before. During the debate, in the early 1990's, over whether or not to ordain women as priests there were a number of localised debates

²⁹³ Brueggemann, W. (2001)., p. 13.

²⁹⁴ James Jones, the bishop of Liverpool, chaired the independent panel into the Hillsborough disaster. The panel he chaired examined whether the police, amongst others, were culpable for the deaths of 96 people at the FA Cup semi-final match on the 15th of April in 1989. In addition, John Sentamu, now archbishop of York, chaired the Macpherson inquiry team that examined the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1999.

hosted by carefully selected chairs. The subject matter was highly controversial and there was considerable worry that the Church of England could split and disintegrate over the result - whichever way the final vote went. It did not and has not. One such chair, now a retired Bishop, told me that he had been asked to oversee a number of these debates over a six-month period. He began chairing the debates with the personal view that women should not be ordained as priests. However, by the end of this role as chair he found that the numerous arguments and personal experiences had led him into a new and alternative perspective that he felt free to embrace. Many were surprised at his change in position - he was not. His unique role meant that he spent each and every debate listening carefully to each and every person who spoke. At the end of each debate his role required him to summarise all that had been said. This process led him to a place where he was able to show many others new insights. He had gained their trust and, thereby, was able to help others freely explore competing 'truths', hear many different views, and enjoy the space to be self-critical of their own opinions. The space allowed epistemic agency to be shared and enjoyed in what had been expected to be a combative and divisive environment.

However, there are too few examples of this happening in local churches and there is no national framework or vision in the Church of England to support those who are without epistemic agency and in need of advocacy support. Whilst there are examples of local churches supporting vulnerable people and providing good levels of support, there is no national strategy to work, collectively, towards this as a prophetic vision for the country. The overriding difficulty for the Church of England is its current state of decline which finds much emphasis placed on institutional matters - either in maintaining it or in restructuring it.²⁹⁵ The only body currently working, with some national success, to transform the lives of those who are in need is the Church Urban Fund. However, it too struggles to maintain its funding and, from personal experience, often has to spend considerable time and resources in firstly persuading congregations and local church leaders to begin to take seriously the plight of those in their local communities. However, despite these significant difficulties the Church should, and must, respond both locally and nationally. It must show that it is willing to embrace

²⁹⁵ Renewal and Reform. See: <https://www.churchofengland.org/renewal-reform.aspx>. The Archbishops have set the Church of England on a lengthy programme designed to explore and change the way that the Church does its decision making, discipleship, evangelism and leadership. However, this rests upon the very real issue of annually declining congregations and finances, alongside ongoing rising costs of salaries, pensions and crumbling buildings. Within this extensive programme there is no mention of any vision for the England as a country or attempt to examine what the prevailing social or cultural issues are. It is, at best, a massive reform of the institution of the Church itself.

those who are labelled pariahs and it must act as prophetic voice that challenges others to do likewise.

5.4 The willingness to embrace in principle.

For justice to flourish there needs to be a willingness to embrace. For Volf forgiveness is both the boundary and the bridge between embrace and exclusion. The forgiveness that the crucifixion epitomises is an ongoing invitation from God to each and every person. Christ, through the cross, makes space and offers an embrace to his enemies who perpetrated his horrendous death. Volf describes the invitation as an embrace that happens, like a drama or a dance unfolding, in four simple acts²⁹⁶:

- the **arms open** offering an embrace
- the **arms remaining open**
- the **arms closing** in an embrace
- the **arms open again**

The first stage, this involves **arms open**, offers the invitation to come and engage in an embrace. This should be offered within a space that suggests equality between the different parties, rather than one that implies strength over weakness. It should be offered without condition and in the context that it can be freely rejected at any point. The embrace is offered, by the arms remaining open, in advance of anyone being ready to accept it and may need to keep being offered again and again.

The second stage, this involves the **arms remaining open**, creates the space and opportunity for God to act supernaturally. The waiting builds dependence upon God. The waiting sits hand in hand with the concept of resting akin to that of being in the waiting room of a doctor's surgery - there is both nothing to do, in terms of action, and yet also there is an expectation of movement and a meeting that will come at some point. The waiting requires an active laying aside of striving, or a need for any control, as there is nothing to be done or said yet. It is, therefore, an act of faith and of love and of patience. The waiting ends when the 'other' begins to accept the offer of an embrace and approaches - not before.

Only then can the third stage, this involves the **arms closing**, begin. I have often noticed, in pastoral ministry, how those who enjoy a simple hug, can too often inflict it upon others without paying much attention to the negative body language being displayed. Sometimes it is all too apparent that whilst the 'other' has accepted the offer

²⁹⁶ Volf, M. (1996)., p, 141.

of a hug they are actually only comfortable with the briefest of encounters. In this simplest of examples is a demonstration of the complexities involved in human interactions. The 'embrace', of course, goes well beyond a 'hug' and is an invitation to share both one's epistemic agency and vulnerability at the same time.

In this the third act, of **closing the arms**, Volf discusses the need for the act to become reciprocal. The intent is not for it be akin to a parent consoling a small child, but rather than the initial roles of host and guest become muddled, confused and then shared. The purpose of the invitation has not been to control, patronise or be overly paternal, rather it has been to create an environment where epistemic agency slowly becomes equalised. In it each person is placed in an equally vulnerable and secure place at one and the same time. This is about giving the 'other' the space and scope to use their own voice - not a patriarchal takeover where those with epistemic agency benevolently speak on behalf of those who do not. There would be no mercy or justice in that.

The fourth stage, with the **arms open again**, is not simply the final stage in a linear pattern, but rather it is the one that leads back into the first stage again in a cyclical pattern that will need to be repeated time and time again. The repeating nature of these stages and the open invitation, that needs to be continually maintained, is a little like the revolving doors at the front of a hotel. At any point you can enter and engage or dis-engage and leave again. Moreover, the repetition is an outward sign of the internal economy of love that is unconditionally patient and does not stop offering it unconditionally.

The releasing of each other, when the **arms open again**, brings not only each other back to their separate identities, but it also begins to demonstrate if anything has changed for each party in their agency. Has a new relationship begun? Can the 'other' now offer open arms in return and on an equal basis? Would they be allowed to or would the old rules of epistemic injustice snap back into place as the 'other' is firmly put back into their place of truncated citizenship? The danger in attempting this is that a glimmer of hope is offered, is accepted, is briefly enjoyed, and then cruelly snatched away. Whilst it may have been offered it in good faith, those offering may have not realised that they were not ready to share their own epistemic agency with another. I have observed this happening too often to people already trapped in 'webs of poverty.' It is cruel and unnecessary.

5.5 The willingness to embrace in practice.

As a parish priest I have often observed that movements in attitudes, that lead to cultural change, appear to begin small and originate from a local context. Once a momentum has gathered then, this simply appears to be the case from personal observation, they can, hopefully, move into a wider acceptance across a greater geographical area. The local church, or Parish Church, is where this movement towards an 'embrace' should begin from.

There is a real need in society for a ministry of advocacy that would provide appropriate advocates to:

- create and defend the space for those muted to speak with their own voice;
- encourage those who have been muted to take the first steps towards speaking for themselves;
- collect the narratives that tell of both epistemic injustice and epistemic mercy in order to promote a positive counter-narrative.

This would begin as a local service offered freely to anyone who lived locally to support them in speaking with their own voice providing the **open arms** that Volf urges. This would involve helping individuals to speak up for themselves - perhaps in regard to very practical issues and problems with other agencies and institutions. It would be concerned with ensuring they were afforded the same epistemic agency as anyone else. It would also involve the opportunity to join up with others in a forum and have an opportunity to tell their narrative and be heard by others. The reality of providing safe space is that this would be, as previously suggested, messy and chaotic. The four stages the Volf suggests may never be achieved. The **open arms** cannot close if the 'other' does not engage in even the briefest of embraces. The 'other' may simply accept the offer of the **open arms** and move swiftly onto the opportunity to speak using their own voice with the advocacy support standing alongside them. They may not want, at that point, any aspect of the relationship underpinning Volf's embrace. For the advocate and for the Church this needs to be part of the reality of the expectation - the 'other' is allowed to respond however the 'other' chooses to respond. If there is any other expectation from the Church, then clearly the **arms** were never truly **open** in the first place.

Advocacy should seek to ensure that people who are most vulnerable in society are able to express their own views, concerns, and be able to defend and promote their own rights and position. The aim should not be to speak on someone's behalf as if they are

unable to speak for themselves. However, as a champion they may need to defend their right to speak and to be heard. The role requires patience, kindness and a willingness to hold the safe space without needing to occupy it and take over by speaking for them. The reality of sharing epistemic agency is that, in the rebalancing, the one with the **open arms** may need to relinquish their agency for a time. There must be a shared vulnerability.

The role also requires the Church, and the individuals acting as advocates, to understand what it means to offer **open arms** to anyone. Anyone will include both those whom society believes should be supported, and those whom it looks upon with condemnation as pariahs. This latter group will include, amongst others, sex offenders, migrant workers, ex-offenders, teenagers in gangs, and young girls who are pregnant. There needs to be an environment where each person is invited into the embrace as if they were Christ Himself. Even if the Church is able to do this, there will be many, from both within and without, who will mock, criticise and condemn the efforts. The reality for any involved in advocacy is that they too may be targeted with demeaning and devaluing narratives.

This significant endeavor requires appropriate support, guidance, training and oversight. The right place, I believe, for this to begin is at a local Parish Church and with ordinary and everyday Christians - people who, I hope, would be willing to be the **open arms** that Volf urges. The right national organisation to support this, guide it and provide some oversight is the Church Urban Fund - who are, in my opinion, an organisation that consistently provides a prophetic voice within the Church of England and to wider society. The actual barrier to this, as I have often found, will be the training. How 'Christian', theological, worldly, secular, tied into local government policy, clinical, or professional et al... should it be? Who should provide and validate the training, the trainees, and the trained once operating in the field²⁹⁷?

The reality is that these initial problems and questions are only the beginning of issues that will arise in such a messy, chaotic, and interpersonal ministry. However, that this ministry is needed is beyond doubt. This ministry should also be the vehicle for collating stories of truncated citizenship and voicelessness; of the experiences of the demeaned and the devalued. The role of the Church, whilst standing with **open arms**,

²⁹⁷ For example, SEAP. See: <http://www.seap.org.uk>. SEAP provide advocacy training and are a nationally approved City & Guilds accredited training provider. They discuss the urgent need for the charitable sector to 'step up' in the growing gap in advocacy provision across the country. Since the public sector cuts numerous local and national providers of advocacy no longer operate.

should also stand as guard against the destructive counter-narrative of blaming one group of people for another's misfortune; of creating a new group of scapegoats to blame.

It is highly probable that the Church, just as those leading in the Truth and Reconciliation Process found, would face considerable hostility and criticism for both its decision to take a lead role in creating safe space for those who have been silence, and also for its insistence to refuse to blame, judge or condemn anyone at any point - whatever the evidence appears to demonstrate. For justice to flow there must be forgiveness, for forgiveness to flow there must be a choice that is made - a choice to stand there, whatever the situation, with **arms open, waiting...** In choosing to 'Act' in this way the Church will demonstrate its belief in Christ and His refusal to condemn. This is a practical work that should be done. It is clearly based upon a theological reflection that comes out of a social analysis. The cycle of 'See', 'Judge', and 'Act' does not finish here though. Rather it simply begins with the first 'Act' of contacting the Church Urban Fund with a view to presenting a vision and a plan to begin this at a local Parish Church. Alongside this there is a need to find a national training organisation who will provide training, accreditation, and validation. This would naturally lead into a new 'See', as part of the Pastoral Cycle, as a project emerges and begins to explore the reality of whether a local church can really offer **arms open** and share epistemic space with 'others' - whomever they are and with whatever emotional issues they come with. The next stumbling block would come when the need comes to 'Judge' the efforts of the local church and the 'others' who it has invited into an embrace; alongside, perhaps, judgements and criticisms of its attempts from those both within and without the Church. Again the Church will need to have its **arms open** ready to hear all of those voices and reflect critically upon the next stage of what action, within the stage of 'Act', to take next.

This is how the Church should respond and can respond. This is the action that must and should begin now.

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